A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY OF MYSTICISM

AN ESSAY

BY CHARLES A. BENNETT

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A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY OF MYSTICISM

AN ESSAY

BY

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PREFACE

I HAVE called this an essay, not in order to add an otiose decoration to the title-page, but to correct the anticipations likely to be aroused by the words "a philosophical study." These imply that the author has a fairly definite metaphysic, a theory of knowledge, and a theory of conduct, by the aid of which he undertakes to give a comprehensive interpretation of his subject. Unfortunately I can lay claim to no such equipment. All I have done is to offer a certain *identification* of mysticism and to point out some of its workings in the general economy of life. But even in trying to do this I have raised far more questions than I am competent to deal with, so that the book is truly an essay, everywhere tentative and incomplete. In a small room I cherish a guttering candle, which only intensifies my awareness of the untried blackness outside.

My chief debt of gratitude is to Professor W. E. Hocking of Harvard. He gave me my first interest in the subject, now a good many years ago. His work has fed the intellect and aroused the imagination. His analysis of mysticism still seems to me more discriminating and his estimate of it more just than any so far put forward. It would be impossible to specify all the places in the following pages which owe something, directly or indirectly, to him.

INTRODUCTION

NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE ENQUIRY

INTRODUCTION

NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE ENQUIRY

GENIUS is for the most part not discovered—and written about—until the owner of it has been a long time dead. No man is a classic to his own generation. The reverent (or is he the merely cautious?) historian will take no notice of events until the passage of time has conferred upon them a safe remoteness. Emotion produces poetry—when it is remembered in tranquillity. "The owl of Minerva—"

In general, it is safe to surmise, if not to infer, that much writing about a subject is an index not to its vitality but to the opposite.

This certainly holds true of mysticism. In recent years a plethora of books has appeared upon mysticism and the mystics,—biographies, psychological studies, devotional works, works of philosophy; yet few ages can have been less mystical in temper than our own.

The spirit of the time may be right, and then we can only murmur, "So much the worse for mysticism." If it be dead and well dead, as animal sacrifice and *patria potestas* and feudalism are dead, then it is a subject only for psychological dissection or historical record. Yet it may not be dead. Perhaps the truth is that men no longer know how to use it; and then so much the worse for those who have forgotten. In any event the issue cannot be decided offhand. If today we are indifferent to, suspicious of, or even hostile to,

mysticism, doubtless good reasons for this attitude will reveal themselves to inspection. Let me then set down the factors which seem chiefly responsible for making the present mental climate uncongenial to mysticism.

First, we set a high value upon a life of action, with its obligations and its rewards. Responsibility, the consciousness of power that comes with increasing control over nature and human life, the satisfaction of visible achievement, confidence and self-respect, adventure, a literal historical existence,—these are the things that seem good to us, and no mere degradation of our ideal in a vulgar doctrine of success can cancel their rightful claim upon our loyalty. To the common judgment, mysticism, by contrast, is a shedding of responsibility and a retreat from life. The mystic is certainly a moral loafer and probably a spiritual wanton. He is the archetype not only of the unemployed, but, worse still, of the unemployed by choice.

If that other world to which he withdraws from this world of affairs were a verifiable world, there might be something to be said for him; but, as a fact (so the second objection runs), he retreats into his own imagination. And there he finds God, a God who can be seen and known and loved, who imparts grace and answers prayer and does other work in the world. But what thinking man today can bring himself to believe in the existence of such a being? True, on ceremonial occasions and for various official reasons one professes this belief; but these are the requirements of public life. There is no conviction in these professions, nor, with the best will in the world, can there be. For this

God is a supernatural Being and in this day of grace (or lack of it), when we are thoroughly indoctrinated with the idea that beyond Nature there is only—more Nature, and when the report has gone out that to hold the contrary is 'unscientific,' it is preposterous that we should be asked to take seriously either Him or His followers.

The heavens have been emptied of God, but we have made shift to rediscover Him, or perhaps to find a substitute for Him, on earth. Hardly has naturalism dethroned him than a Comte appears to offer us the worship of Humanity. The leaven of positivism works powerfully in many directions among us today. Men are willing to be damned for the glory of Country. The vaguer entities of The Race, Posterity, Civilization, Society, The Beloved Community, The Kingdom of Heaven on Earth—are not these but the many names of the one God? Do not these command our renunciation and our worship? Are not these powerful to save? Is not devotion to these the test of our current morality? It is the social conscience that is the authentic voice of God.

But altruism is not the only modern substitute for religion. To humanitarianism and patriotism and social service we have added science and art and scholarship. Any career which is taken with sufficient impersonal devotion and largeness of imagination, can now, we think, perform the offices of religion. It is as though the undifferentiated religious impulse had been drained off into a number of secular channels. The man who in the Middle Ages would have led a crusade for

the Holy Sepulchre, today leads a crusade against graft or social injustice; he records his gratitude for favours received not by building a chapel to The Virgin but by building a hospital or founding a chair in a university. The lyric or the musical composition has taken the place of the hymn of praise to God. Instead of the cell we have the solitude of the laboratory, the observatory, or a desk in the Bodleian. These secular activities seem to us sufficient, taken separately or together, to satisfy all that man demands from his religion. This is what the service of the immanent God comes to in practice, and we have no need of any other kind of God. Least of all can we desire the God of mysticism, whose worship in some sense competes with, and must therefore distract us from, the pursuit of those ends which we value most.

In sum, then, our love of action, our naturalism, our secularism, are the chief elements which today make up an atmosphere in which the mystic cannot breathe. As I have sketched them, they plainly imply a judgment about what mysticism is. If that judgment were sound we should not even pause to drop a tear upon its grave.

But we do not accept it. The object of this essay is to offer a revised interpretation: to show that mysticism has contributions to make towards the solution of problems of religious knowledge and problems of conduct.

There are two sorts of persons who will not let you go without a definition: the wise man and the fool. The difference between them is that the latter demands

one at the beginning of an investigation, while the former is content to wait until the end. Nothing is to be gained at this stage by proposing a definition of mysticism. I shall simply indicate the scope of the enquiry by making two distinctions.

By mysticism is sometimes meant speculative mysticism, a metaphysical doctrine which proclaims the abstract unity of the Godhead and the obliteration in it of the particularity of individual souls and finite objects. With this doctrine we are not concerned, but with mysticism as a way of life, in which the conspicuous element is the immediate experience of God.

Secondly, mysticism as here used means the mysticism of those who by common consent are its major representatives, a Plotinus, a Teresa, a John of the Cross, a Ruysbroeck. This is not to deny that there is a multitude of lesser lights who bear some of the marks of the mystic, but whose claims to consideration rest chiefly on the ground of pathology. As William James says: "The classic religious mysticism, it must now be confessed, is only a 'privileged' case. It is an *extract,* kept true to type by the selection of the fittest specimens and their preservation in schools. It is carved out from a much larger mass. . . ."[1] Now, even if our conscience would allow us to rest content with the selection of a group for which we could give no better reason than our own discriminating intuition, there are always the critics to keep us up to the mark. They warn us that such selection is arbitrary, designed to furnish an interpretation favourable to mysticism. A more

[1] Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 424-425.

generous induction would, they aver, lead us to see in it a sorry chapter in the record of human aberration. How is this criticism to be met?

I answer at once that I admit the selection but not its arbitrariness. To begin with, most of those who have studied the subject, including many who are not favourably inclined to the mystics or their claims, have had to make a broad distinction such as I have mentioned. They have found themselves writing quite naturally of the great mystic, the true, the real, the intelligent mystic, as contrasted with the inferior or misguided specimen. This appeal to a consensus of opinion is, of course, only external evidence and we cannot stop with it. Nor are we content to employ the ancient device of replying to the charge "You level up" with the retort "You level down"; for the very point at issue is the right to make any distinction of levels at all. No, the evidence so far as it goes is only presumptive of the existence of a distinction which does more than reflect the preference of any one observer.

The chief reason for lumping all mystics within one classification is the alleged fact that they all exhibit in their lives phenomena, which I need not here enumerate, but which are sufficiently suggested by the terms abnormal or pathological. But to generalise from this identity bespeaks superficial observation or reasoning or both. For the outstanding mark which differentiates the real mystic from the pathological case is that the latter is the helpless victim of his mental and physical troubles, while the former is to some degree master of them. Your hysterical patient, for

example, is literally a patient, at the mercy of his impulses, his transports, his melancholy, his automatisms of one kind or another. The mystic is more like a man wrestling with a problem than a man wrestling with a disease. The contrast between the two types is well brought out by Janet in a passage devoted to an analysis of the suggestibility of hysterical subjects. "In suggestion," he writes, ". . . there is no effort on the part of the subject, no addition of strength from his anterior tendencies, no work of his personality. On the contrary, he does not seem to realize the development of what takes place within him. As has often been recognized, he forgets his suggestions as soon as they are ended. He seems to be very little conscious of them while they are being executed. Very often he executes them without knowing it, quite subconsciously. . . . In order that there may be suggestion, it is precisely necessary that . . . *the idea should seem to develop to the extreme, without any participation of the will or of the personal consciousness of the subject.*"[2] The mystic realises what is happening to him. He is self-conscious enough to ask what these things may mean. He has the character and the fixity of purpose to strive for the organisation of his inner life and in this struggle to make use of, and so to rise superior to, the accidents that befall him on his spiritual pilgrimage. An illustration may help to make this clear.

The lives of many mystics have been marked, as is well known, by periods of "dryness." These periods may be rare or frequent, of long or short duration.

[2] The Major Symptoms of Hysteria, pp. 283-284.

They are times of acute mental torture. In the milder forms of this spiritual aridity the subject feels indifferent and even languorous in all that concerns his religious and moral life: he cannot pray or meditate or contemplate—he does not even want to do these things; he feels no love for God and none for his fellow beings: the springs of moral enthusiasm are dried up. In the later stages indifference yields to something more terrifying. God is not merely absent: His absence is felt, one might say, as a positive thing. The mystic comes to doubt his certainties; he is assailed by obscene and blasphemous thoughts. He loathes himself. He is convinced that he is lost. The sun has gone out in his heavens.

Consider now the effect of this experience upon such a mystic as John of the Cross. He does not surrender helplessly to these catastrophes; his original resolution does not desert him; his hold upon his divine Object is never wholly broken. He persists in the attempt to wrest a meaning from these things. The interpretation he finally hits upon is that his self-scrutiny had not been searching enough, that his moral purgation had not been completed. It was God's will to discipline him still more through the extremes of anguish in order that he might be wholly purified in heart.

The worth of this explanation as an explanation is not here in question. What is significant is the sweep and strength of the ambition which can meet suffering in these unforeseen and terrifying shapes and ultimately bend it to its own purpose. It is this moral stamina and this genius for religious experimentation

which marks off the authentic mystic. It is the presence of these qualities that defines the type which we are to study. The selection is not arbitrary: to any faithful observation it is necessary.

We have talked of a thing called the mystic ambition. We have claimed that it is of crucial importance. But so far we have referred to it in vague and general terms. A closer study is called for, and to that we now turn.

PART I

THE MYSTICAL AMBITION

CHAPTER I

METHOD OF APPROACH

WE must begin with an attempt to discover what goal the mystic proposes to himself, for the pilgrim must be judged by the shrine to which he journeys and not by the adventures or mischances which befall him on the way.

This seems an obvious and elementary principle of interpretation, yet one may easily ignore it and come to attach unfair importance to external appearances. For, in the first place, mystical practice if not unnatural is, to say the least, difficult and unusual. It requires a violent reversal of the ordinary direction of the will; one is tempted to use about it the expression which Bergson used about the effort of intuition: it is a remounting of the natural slope of our minds. The mystics turn their backs on everything that we include under the terms culture and civilisation. They leave behind the whole elaborate system of goods which men have discovered and laboured to establish. For action they substitute contemplation; for society, solitude; for reason, ecstasy. There is something so radical about all this, something so eloquent of spiritual melodrama, that we lose all patience with it. We have no desire to penetrate beneath the obvious. It is plain that what we are witnessing is merely an attempt to escape from the hazards and responsibilities of living. We need look no further than the preliminaries of the journey:

these, we say, are the preparations of the renegade from life.

I do not agree with this estimate, but I can see that it needs a considerable exercise of sympathy to look beyond these bizarre external manifestations to the purpose beneath them. Yet one must make the effort, as one makes it in seeking to understand enterprises not wholly unlike that of mysticism. To an external observer, the artist, the scholar in pursuit of useless knowledge, any devotee of the contemplative life, in short, may well seem inefficient and "anti-social" and therefore, in a crudely pragmatic society, in danger of the judgment. But how much do such appearances tell us about the real motive and consequently about the real value of these careers?

In the second place, the temptation to judge mysticism by externals is strengthened by the prevailing psychological interest in religion. Now contemporary psychology is committed to the method of illuminating experience from without rather than from within. Motives yield themselves with difficulty, if at all, to direct inspection. One must, therefore, make shift to read them in translation, as they are expressed in behaviour; or one must try to discover what is going on in the mystic's mind by studying what takes place in his body. Moreover, no psychologist can be content to take mysticism as an isolated phenomenon; by using comparison and analogy he seeks to place it in a class or series of occurrences so that it can be shown to conform to a psychological law or to exhibit in greater or less degree some known tendency of human nature. An

example will serve to show the method and the dangers to which it is exposed.

Godferneaux, in a well-known article, has proposed to regard mystical states as the reflections in consciousness of fluctuations in coenesthesia or alternations in the level of vital energy. "La vie religieuse," he writes, "ou vie intérieure, ou vie mystique, . . . a pour base constante une série de faits organiques ou coenesthésiques, traduits dans la conscience par des états affectifs et des représentations mentales correspondantes. . . . Ces faits organiques, considérés en bloc, peuvent se ramener à une hyper- ou à une hypotension de l'énérgie vitale. Les états affectifs varient comme cette tension: on possède Dieu plus ou moins, on est plus ou moins privé, selon qu'elle est plus ou moins intense."[1]

In order to reach this conclusion Godferneaux sets out from the fact that the ordinary emotional life of man is subject to continual oscillation: on the one hand, depression, restlessness, hesitancy; on the other, certainty, peace, joy. For the most part the oscillation is not violent, but in some cases the extremes are strongly marked. There is a permanent physiological basis for this, as noted in the above quotation. Mysticism in its purity is the upper limit of this movement, or, more accurately, this limit is the point to which mystical states tend.

I am here concerned only with the limitations of Godferneaux's method if we take it as sufficient for

[1] A. Godferneaux, Sur la psychologie du mysticisme. Revue Philosophique, t. LIII, p. 168.

purposes of explanation. Note that in regarding the religious life as the ineffectual accompaniment of changes in the organism we have tacitly assumed that the subject is passive. Mystical experiences just happen to him, and we interpret his life by these happenings. Godferneaux's language admits as much. "L'extase vraie," he writes, "ne serait donc que l'excès . . . d'un état que l'on doit ranger parmi les accidents ordinaires de la vie consciente." [p. 163] "C'est par l'intermédiaire de la vie organique que . . . nous participons directement, sans l'intermédiaire de la raison, à la vie universelle, *et nous en exprimons les vicissitudes.*" [p. 164. Italics mine.] His language shows that he has adopted the medical point of view and is regarding the mystic as a patient. The possibility of any voluntary attention on the part of the mystic is not even considered, and this exclusion rules out *a fortiori* all question of motive. He is not supposed to have any. He is represented as, quite literally, the victim of circumstance, and his entire effort to interpret and organise his experiences drops out of sight. But to ignore this is to ignore the essential.

We must therefore look further than the superficial circumstances of the mystic's career. True, in some respects he looks like a patient, just as in others he looks like a renegade; but, apart from some hypothesis as to his purpose, how shall we know how to distinguish between those resemblances which are accidental and those which are essential?

Let us begin then by examining some theories of the mystical ambition.

Mysticism has so often been allied with vast and awe-inspiring metaphysical systems that the name has come to be identified with a type of solution for a speculative problem. Thus Royce treats it as one of the four historical attempts to define the real. The mystic he says defines the real, paradoxically, as the indefinable. It is that which is all that the finite is not, that which refuses to be caught in the net of any predicate, that simple unity which excludes all difference from its own nature. Yet one must doubt whether adherence to the doctrine of the abstract universal necessarily makes one a mystic. One may hold that the real is an undifferentiated One, but some further stroke of insight is needed to turn this into a mystical conclusion. This insight is the discovery that the mystic himself is one with what he knows, and, since what he claims to know is reality itself, we may say that he has discovered what it means to be real.

> But what thing dost thou now,
> Looking Godward, to cry,
> "I am I, thou art thou,
> I am low, thou art high"?
> I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him; find thou but thyself, thou art I.

This is the characteristic mystical consummation: the achievement of union with reality. It is not the knowledge that all things are one, but the union which, on the basis of a philosophy of the abstract universal, logically follows from such knowledge, that constitutes the mystic attainment. If you start from the position

that the distinction between the finite and the infinite, between man and God, is illusory, then the mystical attainment can only be described as an experience of seeing through that illusion. The soul has never been separated from God so one cannot talk of it being reunited to God; but there was an illusion of separation and that illusion can be overcome. Expressed in these terms, the achievement seems almost indistinguishable from a purely cognitive or speculative triumph; yet this insight is not desired by the mystic for its own sake, but for the sake of that assurance of having found one's place in the scheme of things which the insight confers.

This conclusion is confirmed by what we know of the temperaments of those mystics who have revealed themselves in confession and autobiography. Intellectual doubts trouble them very little: they are not concerned with philosophical problems. Philosophy, indeed, is one of the hindrances which they try to remove. This attitude is conspicuous among the Christian mystics, but it is not confined to them. Thus Al Ghazzali, himself a philosopher, writes as follows of his inner struggles:

> Coming seriously to consider my state, I found myself bound down on all sides by these trammels. Examining my actions, the most fair-seeming of which were my lecturing and professorial occupations, I found to my surprise that I was engrossed in several studies of little value, and profitless as regards my salvation. I probed the motives of my teaching and found that, in place of being sincerely consecrated to God, it was only actuated by a vain desire of

honor and reputation. I perceived that I was on the edge of an abyss, and that without an immediate conversion I should be doomed to eternal fire.[2]

This is not the language of intellectual perplexity, but of a concern about something quite different—salvation.

Salvation is a word which has borne and bears many meanings. Without attempting to examine these divergent renderings we can mark its most general difference from all forms of intellectual satisfaction.

To experience ignorance is to be aware chiefly of a bar to further knowledge: we are 'at a stand.' We do not see through the limitation to anything positive on the far side. The effect of the experience is to create a feeling of insecurity rather than of fear. When we contrast the religious predicament with this we see that it adds to man's insecurity a sense of alienation. He becomes a stranger in his world. At the same time he begins to feel not only fear but something worse—*panic*. We might describe the contrast by saying that in the religious experience the limitation is beginning to become transparent. There is at once ignorance and some inkling of the presupposition of that ignorance. One now faces not merely a darkness of the unknown but a darkness which conceals another presence. One's problem is no longer to lift the veil of ignorance, but to remove the feelings of alienation and of fear by making one's peace with that which has caused them.[3]

[2] Confessions of Al Ghazzali, trans. by Claude Field, p. 43.

[3] *Cf.* W. E. Hocking, The Meaning of God in Human Experience, ch. xvi, and G. H. Palmer, The Field of Ethics, pp. 149-166.

Let us look at the situation from a slightly different point of view. There are many types of perplexity and dissatisfaction which have no religious significance. Thus the search for a life work may be wholly an affair of practical wisdom. My uncertainty about the choice of a career, if prolonged, may bring me to this pass: I cannot discover a convincing reason to identify myself with any one pursuit; to no one task can I say: Be thou my good. I become highly critical, presumptuous even. Nothing is good enough for me. 'This world,' I say, 'is no place for me.' Now there may come a moment when religion steps in to transform this groping and to transform it at first by intensifying the distress of mind. It is the moment when I trace the source of the trouble to myself, when I see that it is not these human tasks that are worthless but my own vision which is distorted. In short, it is the moment when the sense of ignorance becomes the sense of sin. What has happened? "In first judging his world, man seems to find his world *judging him.*" What could have caused this reflection except an experience which put me for a moment at a point outside the self from which I could see myself through the eyes of another? May we not say that the consciousness of sin is the consciousness of another Mind behind the universe, whose approval I now have to win?

Thus the doubt which religion generates is a doubt about the moral relation of the human soul to God. The alternative with which it torments man is not that of God or no God but that of God remote or God near at

hand. Religious despair is born of a sense of alienation, and what religion announces as salvation is the restoration of harmony.

In describing in this general way the restlessness to which religion gives rise we have been at the same time describing the kind of experience from which the mystic career in most instances takes its start. That long and arduous spiritual journey has its origin in the perception that if reality seems evil this is caused not by anything in the nature of things themselves but by some defect in the mystic's vision. What work there is to be done must be done on his own soul, for it is his soul which excludes him from the vision of reality as divine. The world has somehow failed him; before facing it again he must overcome that estrangement which separates him from the God of this world.

It may be urged that we are doing some injustice to his career by saying that it begins with a moment of defeat. Often, it will be said, the starting point is a moment of illumination in which there is a sudden perception of supreme worth. A film falls from the eyes and the world appears in a new light. Things are no longer ordinary. There comes the certainty that *this* is the real world whose true character human blindness has until now concealed.

> Not where the wheeling systems darken
> And our benumbed conceiving soars;—
> The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
> Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

> The angels keep their ancient places;
> Turn but a stone and start a wing!
> 'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces
> That miss the many-splendoured thing.

The experience is at first tantalizing, alluring. There is a rumour of a new world and the spirit is eager for the voyage upon strange seas. The familiar world must be left behind. The great adventure of religion begins. "Tout ce qui, dans cet état, nous élève au-dessus des phénomènes, c'est un souvenir et une espérance; un écho affaibli qui pourtant nous enchante, et devant lequel s'efface tout ce qu'on peut désirer sous le ciel."

This is a true account. Yet the logic of this experience is not essentially different from that of the conviction of sin. To find reality divine and to accuse oneself of blindness up to that moment are two sides of the same insight: it is an accident of temperament or circumstance whether the emphasis shall fall upon the first or the second.

In criticising the theory that mysticism is concerned with the solution of intellectual difficulties we have suggested a different rendering of the religious ambition. We have used vague names: the desire for salvation, for union with God, for the finding of one's place in reality. In a later chapter we shall have to essay some less indefinite formula. By way of preparation we may compare our present interpretation with one which has found considerable support among psychologists.

Murisier declares that most mystics whose mental

history is accessible to us have shown themselves in the early part of their lives to be victims of a radical and extensive instability. They have been subject to frequent and violent alternations of emotion: no middle path where feeling remains relatively uniform seems open to them. Further, they have lacked the power of making decisions. They are constantly torn between conflicting temptations: between society and solitude, abstinence and self-indulgence. They do not own, they are owned by, their impulses. Intellect and imagination are invaded by the same trouble. They cannot concentrate the attention, and their most hopeful hours may be interrupted by blasphemous and obscene thoughts and images. Further, these mental sufferings are usually accompanied by physical ills. In short, life with its crowding demands, impulses, feelings, sensations, is too much for them. These things import into the mind their own multiplicity. This is the real meaning of the mystics' "entanglement with the creatures."

The mystic discipline seems to be designed to afford relief to this condition of anarchy, its object to be the attainment of peace at any price. The price is the abandonment of the attempt to integrate the competing tendencies and to substitute the way of simplification. Proceeding by elimination and suppression the mystics succeed in putting the religious idea or emotion in supreme control, or rather in exclusive possession. They grow absorbed in the thought of God or lost in the love of God or they become the passive instrument of the divine will. With this absorption comes the unity of mind and the peace which they sought. We see, then,

says Murisier, "qu'ils cherchent . . . à substituer une volonté supérieure à leur propre volonté et qu'ils se trouvent à l'égard de Dieu dans la même situation que ces malades vis-à-vis de leurs médecins et de leurs directeurs." "On le voit, le besoin religieux est, au fond, un cas special de ce besoin général de direction."[4]

If Murisier is right we should have to conclude that the mystic is interested primarily in his own troubles and in winning relief therefrom, that he is driven by an almost uncontrollable impulse to impoverish his mind until only one idea or feeling is left, and that the whole process is a subjective one in which he is manipulating his own mental states.

Without attempting to criticise this account in detail we may note two objections which have a bearing upon the main purpose of our enquiry. First, our analysis of the kind of experience with which mysticism begins makes it clear that Murisier has reversed the proper order of the facts. The mystic seeks to unify his mind in order that he may become one with God. To use the familiar metaphor, he endeavours to clarify his vision not that he may escape the discomforts of blindness or defective vision, but in order to see reality as it truly is. God is not thought of as a director whose guidance is to be used in the conduct of life: He is not means but end; He is not used but loved. The ultimate direction of the mind is outward, not inward. The mystic is doing work upon himself not with any thought of self-sufficiency in the process, but in order that God may do work upon him.

[4] Murisier, Les Maladies du Sentiment religieux, pp. 37, 36.

In the second place the comparison with the relation of patient to doctor is misleading. The mystic's attitude is wholly different from that of the hypnotised subject who recalls the blessings of the hypnotic state and implores to be put to sleep again and from that of the patient who asks for some more of the same drug. The mystic does not think of God as physician, for he is undertaking to *earn* the solution of his problems, so far as that is possible, and not to achieve it by a process which, so far as it is not understood, is, for the mystic, magical. We miss the essence of the mystics' preparation unless we see that it is a *moral* preparation. They know that in order to see God one must be pure in heart and that there is some moral necessity in the divine response. They can never be sure that God will or must reveal himself to the waiting soul—the ultimate revelation is always by virtue of the grace of God; but they know, negatively, that without this moral preparation the vision will not be granted.[5] In other words, the result of the preparation, when it comes, is understood by the mystics as in part deserved, for they can see here a sequence of moral cause and effect. This is not true of the relation between patient and doctor.

If, after this scrutiny of what mystic ambition is *not,* we are driven back to describe it as the desire for

[5] *Cf.* Fénelon, Maximes des Saints, art. x. "Les promesses sur la vie étérnelle sont purement gratuites. La grâce ne nous est jamais due; autrement il ne serait plus grâce. . . . Mais, quoique Dieu ne nous doive jamais rien, en rigueur, il a voulu nous donner des droits fondés sur ses promesses purement gratuites. Par ses promesses, il s'est donné comme suprême béatitude à l'âme qui lui est fidèle avec persévérance."

union with God, it is not with a claim to have established much that is definite. As far as we have gone we have left it an open question whether there is a positive behind the negations of the mystic or not. All we have shown is that the facts do not necessarily commit us to the view that he is seeking escape or simplification. And, indeed, the conception of union with God is still so vague that until we can make this union appear a more positive thing, something which might well dim by its brightness the worth of all objects of the secular will, we cannot clear the mystic of the charge that he is concerned only to avoid the world and its problems. To this estimate of his career we now turn.

CHAPTER II

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

THE ideal of mysticism is accordingly exactly contrary to the ideal of reason: Instead of perfecting human nature it seeks to abolish it; instead of building a better world, it would undermine the foundations even of the world we have built already; instead of developing our mind to greater scope and precision it would return to the condition of protoplasm—to the blessed consciousness of Unutterable Reality."

Over against this estimate of the mystics as the nihilists of human nature, the destroyers of form and the enemies of discipline, let me set a quotation from one of their number. "All those other things in which [the soul] once took pleasure, power, strength, wealth, beauty, science, it now says that it holds in contempt (ὑπεριδοῦσα). It would not say this if it had not come upon something better than these."[1]

The statement of Plotinus seems the more just. The mystical rejection of human goods does not look like the expression of a destructive impulse but indicates rather the working of the vision of a good so supremely valuable that "the world" by contrast appears worthless. As James put it, "Their very denial of every adjective you may propose as applicable to the ultimate truth . . . though it seems on the surface to be a no-function, is a denial made on behalf of a deeper yes.

[1] Plotinus, Enn., VI, vii, 34.

Whoso calls the Absolute anything in particular or says that it is *this,* seems implicitly to shut it off from being *that*—it is as if he lessened it. So we deny the this, negating the negation which it seems to imply in the interests of the higher affirmative attitude by which we are possessed."[2] The mystics themselves have often insisted that their denials are so many tributes to the greatness of that with which they deny. Thus Suso gives the standard explanation when he writes: "Hence a wise doctor says, that the eye of our intelligence, owing to its infirmity, is affected towards that being which is in itself the most manifest of all beings as the eye of a bat or a night-owl towards the bright dazzle of the sun; for particular beings distract and dazzle the mind, so that it cannot see the divine darkness, which is in itself the brightest of all brightness."[3] Your real mystic does not hate the world—he is superior to it.

This attitude comes out with especial clearness in the mysticism of Greek thinkers. There are many signs in both Plato and Aristotle of the tendency to regard the political and social life of man as at least subordinate to the contemplative life, as though he who had entered upon the latter had more certainly realised human destiny. In Neoplatonism this judgment emerges frankly. Plotinus' treatment of the virtues is determined by his view of them as a preparation for the ultimate mystic attainment. Each of the three types, the cathartic, the political, and the theoretical, is an

[2] The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 416.
[3] Life, trans. by T. F. Knox, ch. lv.

embodiment of 'form.' They represent successive approximations to the principle of pure form and the practice of them likens man to the divine. But since the mystic has immediately experienced that at which they all aim—pure form—he can afford to look upon them as having merely propaideutic value. As to St. Paul the Law was a schoolmaster, so to Plotinus the discipline of the moral life becomes in retrospect a superseded instrument for one who has achieved the good which this discipline was designed to introduce.[4] Precisely the same scheme of values reappears in the traditional Christian doctrine of the Three Ages—The Age of the Father, The Age of the Son, The Age of The Spirit. The first is an age of law, the second of priests and sacraments, the third of freedom.[5] The mystic, as it were, forestalls the processes of history by anticipating in his own life the enjoyment of the last age.

But one may better appreciate this temper of serene detachment by turning from abstract statements to the experience itself. I give two examples of it.

Among several fourteenth-century documents of English mysticism there is one by an unknown writer called An Epistle of Discretion in Stirrings of the Soul. It is a reply to one who sought advice on some matters of the spiritual life. "Thou askest me counsel of silence and of speaking, of common dieting and of singular fasting, of dwelling in company and only

[4] Enn., I, ii, 2.

[5] *Cf.* H. Delacroix, Le Mysticisme spéculatif en Allemagne au Quatorzième Siècle, pp. 42 ff.

woning by thyself." The substance of the reply is that these things are neither good nor bad in themselves; they are bad only when "conceived on the ape's manner." "And thereto when thou seest that all such works in their use may be both good and evil; I pray thee, leave them both, for that is the most ease for thee to do, if thou wilt be meek, and leave the curious beholding and seeking in thy wits to look whether is better. But do thou thus: set the one on the one hand and the other on the other, and choose thee a thing which is hid between them; the which thing, when it is had, giveth thee leave in freedom of spirit to begin and to cease in holding any of the others at thine own full list, without any blame. I shall tell thee what I mean that it is: It is God."[6]

The author of the *Theologia Germanica* distinguishes "four sorts of men who are concerned with order, law and customs." "The first are obedient from constraint, the second for the sake of reward. The third are wicked false-hearted men, who dream and declare that they are perfect and need no ordinances, and make a mock of them. . . . The fourth are those who are enlightened with the True Light, who do not practise these things for reward, . . . but all that they do is from love alone. And these are not so anxious and eager to accomplish much and with all speed as the second sort, but rather seek to do things in peace and good leisure; and if some not weighty matter be neglected they do not therefore think themselves lost, for they know very well that order and fitness are better

[6] Printed in The Cell of Self-Knowledge, ed. by E. G. Gardner.

than disorder, and therefore they choose to walk orderly, *yet know at the same time that their salvation hangeth not thereon.*"[7]

Here, we may say, is an attitude of audacious superiority, yet what is most significant in it is that the mystic makes no point of its audaciousness. There is nothing defiant or obstreperous here; the language is not the violent language of the revolutionary, but the quiet (and, to some, the exasperating) assurance of one who holds himself to have known and enjoyed that absolute good towards which human ambition in its multiple forms is directed. I say that the absence of violence is the most notable thing here because the appeal to something beyond society and beyond morality may so easily turn into a blind hostility to both. You can hardly take seriously that requirement of absolute detachment from the world without coming in time to exploit your own opposition, making a virtue of your difference from the common run of men and so falsifying your own intention.[8] History furnishes too many examples of this perversion of the will in religion for us to doubt the dangers of any attempt to find a short cut to ultimate satisfaction. Yet to judge

[7] Ch. xxxix. Italics mine.

[8] Asceticism as a method of attaining complete detachment has been shown by experience to be inadequate. The lives of Gautama Buddha, Suso, Madame Guyon, for example, afford plenty of evidence in support of this statement. And it failed not only because the attempt to drive out will by will is doomed to defeat—where nihilism becomes necessary it is for that reason absurd; but also because human nature is not so constituted that it can wage vehement and incessant war upon its impulses without coming in time to pride itself upon its own belligerency.

mysticism by those who have succumbed to this temptation is to overlook the fact that mysticism contains both a safeguard and a corrective. Whenever it has led to antinomianism there have been found champions of a saner, because more self-conscious, mysticism, to rebuke and disown these self-styled claimants to the inner light. The passage quoted from the *Theologia Germanica* is typical in this respect.[9] One might give many other illustrations, but the meaning of them all is this: that the mystic himself is able to distinguish between "beyond-man" and "hostile-to-man." His ultimate ambition is continuous with, if other than, those human purposes whose worth he seems to deny.

We might express this in another way by saying that while contemplation is pursued for its own sake and not for the sake of action, it seems to have some necessary connection with action. Let us first establish the fact of this connection and then seek for some understanding of it. To begin with, it is clear that the mystics do not seek God in order to return to the world better fitted for active life. The specifically moral needs may be present in the earlier stages of the preparation, but these needs, with others, are destined to be put under as they gather themselves into "a piercing act of direction, a naked intent of the will fastening itself upon God." Worship to be worship must be wholly disinterested. And the consummation of it carries a conviction of finality. Plotinus speaks for all the mystics when he says, "When in this state the soul would exchange its present condition for nothing, no, not for

[9] *Cf.* Ruysbroeck, Book of Supreme Truth, ch. iv.

the very heaven of heavens; for there is nothing better, nothing more blessed than this."[10]

Yet there is something paradoxical about this finality: it must be in some sense surrendered in order to be retained. Contemplation seems to demand action. Mystics have commonly insisted upon the transiency of the ecstasy, but, as has been acutely pointed out,[11] while they have expressed regret at this they have not expressed surprise. In this they tacitly admit that there is some organic bond between the two directions of attention represented by God and the world. Many of them have gone further: they have clearly recognised the existence of the alternation and have tried to explain it. I will give some examples.

> If then a man sees himself become one with the One, he has in himself a likeness of the One, and if he passes out of himself, as an image to its archetype, he has reached the end of his journey. And when he comes down from his vision, he can again awaken the virtue that is in him, and seeing himself fitly adorned in every part he can again mount up through virtue to spirit, and through wisdom to God.[12]

Christian mystics employ a variety of images, the most familiar of which are Martha-and-Mary, The Two Eyes of the Soul and metaphors drawn from human love. I give an example of each.

[10] Enn., VI, vii, 34. Inge, The Philosophy of Plotinus, II, p. 134.

[11] W. E. Hocking, The Meaning of God in Human Experience, p. 390.

[12] Plotinus, Enn. VI, ix, 11. This is a summary of Plotinus' teaching on this point. For an admirable exposition see Inge, *op. cit.*, vol. II, lecture xxi, especially pp. 178-181 and 201-203.

Pour donner à Notre Seigneur une hospitalité parfaite il faut que Marthe et Marie se joignent ensemble. [Teresa, Chat. Int. Septième demeure, ch. iv, ed. Bouix.]

The Two Eyes of the Soul are those with which we look into Time and Eternity. In Boehme's second *Dialogue of the Supersensual Life* the disciple asks the master whether the use of the right eye, that is, the eye which looks into Eternity, will 'not destroy nature.' The master replies:

By no means at all. It is true, the evil nature will be destroyed by it; but by the destruction thereof you can be no loser, but very much a gainer. The eternal band of nature is the same afterward as before, and the properties are the same. So that nature hereby is only advanced and meliorated, and the light thereof, or human reason, by being kept within its due bounds, and regulated by a superior light, is only made useful. . . . Both eyes may become very useful if ordered aright; and both the divine and natural light may in the soul subsist together, and be of mutual service each to the other.

In primo gradu fit desponsatio, in secundo nuptiae, in tertio copula, in quarto puerperium. . . . De quarto dicitur, concepimus, et quasi parturivimus et peperimus spiritum.[13]

The explanations proposed by the mystics fall into two classes, one metaphysical, the other psychological. According to the first, it is the body which stands in the way of permanent ecstasy and union. "Why, then,"

[13] Richard of St. Victor, De quatuor gradibus violentae Charitatis. Migne, Pat. Lat., vol. 191, col. 1216. One may compare with this the Platonic τόκος ἐν καλῷ and that rendering of the Incarnation by some Christian mystics as a birth of Christ which takes place in the individual soul.

asks Plotinus, "does not the soul abide yonder? Because it has not yet wholly left its eternal abode. But the time will come when it will enjoy the vision without interruption, no longer troubled with the hindrance of the body."[14] And St. John of the Cross writes, "As to actual union, . . . there is not, and cannot be *in this life,* any abiding union in the faculties of the soul, but only that which is passing."[15] "This wonderful onehead," declares Walter Hilton, "may not be fulfilled perfectly, continually and wholly in this life, for the corruption of the flesh, but only in the bliss of Heaven."[16] The Christian mystics have not perceived the difficulty of reconciling this doctrine with the idea of spiritual marriage or transforming union, —a state in which an uninterrupted feeling of God's presence is combined with action, and which for many constitutes the consummation of the mystical life. And as a fact it is impossible to harmonise a view of mysticism which traces the necessity for the rhythmic movement between contemplation and action to our finite constitution with a view which looks towards the abolition of that rhythm within this life.

[14] Enn., VI, ix, 10.

[15] Ascent of Mount Carmel, Book II, ch. 5. Italics mine.

[16] The Song of Angels. The Cell of Self-Knowledge, p. 64. I may add here, for the sake of contrast, an extract from a mystic who writes in a sense opposed to that of the above quotations.

"Truly if any man might get both lives, that is to say contemplative and active, and keep and fulfil them, he were full great; that he might fulfil bodily service, and nevertheless feel the heavenly sound in himself, and be melted in singing into the joy of heavenly love. I wot not if ever any mortal man had this. To me it seems impossible that both should be together." Richard Rolle, The Fire of Love, ch. xxi, ed. by F. M. Comper.

The other type of explanation invokes the kind of psychological necessity by which inspiration passes into expression or love into generosity. Thus Ruysbroeck writes:

> God comes to us without ceasing . . . and demands of us both action and fruition, in such a way that the one never impedes but always strengthens the other. And therefore the most inward man lives his life in these two ways: namely in work and in rest. And in each he is whole and undivided; for he is wholly in God because he rests in fruition, and he is wholly in himself because he loves in activity: and he is perpetually called and urged by God to renew both the rest and the work. And the justice of the spirit desires to pay every hour that which is demanded of it by God. . . . This just man has established a true life in the spirit, in rest and in work, which shall endure eternally; but after this life it shall be changed into a higher state." [*Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage,* ch. lxv, trans. by C. A. Wynschenk Dom.]

And so Fénelon:

> Il est toujours également vrai que plus l'âme reçoit de Dieu plus elle doit lui rendre ce qu'elle en a reçu. C'est ce flux et reflux qui fait tout l'ordre de la grâce et toute la fidélité de la créature. [*Maximes des Saints,* art. xxix.]

I cannot help thinking that Plotinus in such a typical passage as the following is really transferring to the Godhead that urgent need for self-expression which properly pertains to the mystic experience itself. His problem, of course, is why the One should be differentiated into the multiple life of the universe. "Why should we suppose that the One would remain standing

still in itself? From envy? Or from want of power, though it is the power of all things?" [*Enn.*, V, iv, 1.]

So much for the explanations offered by the mystics. How are we ourselves to interpret the matter?

It is perhaps natural at first to look for analogies in the mechanical and the organic rhythms. The metaphors ready to hand aid and abet this tendency, and so we find terms like systole and diastole, flux and reflux, expansion and contraction, occurring frequently in descriptions of mysticism. Here is a typical statement of this kind. "La vie marche par palpitations, par alternations d'élans et de recueillements, comme le son, comme la lumière, comme la vie même de notre terre qui n'est que vicissitude de nuit et de jour, et d'hiver qui se recueille et d'été qui s'épanouit."[17]

What is little more than descriptive terminology with such an observer becomes a principle of explanation with the psychologist. Mysticism is now read as the psychical equivalent of some bodily oscillation, as with Godferneaux, or is identified with some instinctive rhythm, as in the following passage: "Mysticism is the most primitive of feelings and only visits formed minds in moments of intellectual arrest and dissolution. . . . In the Life of Reason it is, if I may say so, a normal disease, a recurrent manifestation of lost equilibrium and interrupted growth; but in these pauses, when the depths rise to the surface and obliterate what scratches culture may have made there, the rhythm of life may be more powerfully felt."[18] I

[17] Quoted by Godferneaux, Revue Philosophique, vol. 53, p. 165.
[18] Santayana, Reason in Religion, pp. 277-278.

believe that all such explanations miss what is essential and that in this matter the mystic is a better guide to the understanding of the experience than the outsider. For, in the first place, the mystic's problem is a problem of idea. By that I mean that his renunciation of the world is initiated not merely by a feeling of alienation from that world but by a judgment of self-condemnation. The world is no place for him: in order to find life good again he must make himself over. And this means, among other things, making his mind over. No mere automatic and instinctive re-creation of value such as may come through rest, sleep, "wise passiveness," subconscious relief of any kind, can give the mystic what he wants. You can dispose of a problem in two ways: one is by ceasing to put it, the other is by solving it. The latter is the way of the mystic.

Secondly, the moral quality of the mystic's preparation marks it off from the more 'natural' methods of self-recovery.

Thirdly, the preparation involves concentration rather than relaxation: it is more like taking aim, or composing the mind in order to appreciate a work of art than it is like (say) yielding to sleep.

These three objections may be summed up in one statement: mysticism is a deliberate undertaking to recover the principle of value self-consciously. That is why those mystics and those interpreters of mysticism are right who do not hope to find the explanation wholly contained within the field of the natural and instinctive rhythms of life, and who therefore look to

what takes place in the mind rather than to what takes place in the body.

Yet here, above all, it is rash to be dogmatic. There is no need to deny that the mystical flight to the Alone may have an instinctive basis. "The soul," it has been well said, "has an instinct of balance as well as the body,"—a highly generalised instinct such as recent psychology has made much of. And it is true that at the end of his preparation the mystic surrenders himself to the working of some cosmic principle which he does not claim wholly to understand. Further, it is true that there is an element of deliberateness in many of the familiar methods by which we try to recover our sense of the worth of life. The difference between this sort of thing and mystic practice is largely one of degree. The mystics are simply more thorough, more deliberate, and more scrupulous in this regard than the rest of us.

We are now in a position to answer the question with which the first part of this chapter was concerned. I said that the mystic ambition was directed upon something other-than- the world, but that other-than- need not, and indeed did not, mean hostile-to- the world. The question was how to construe this relationship. Otherwise expressed the problem was this: on the one hand the mystics declare that the moment of ecstasy introduces one to a final and absolute good; yet, on the other hand, how can there be anything final in an experience which by some profound necessity has to be completed by a return to the world?

It will not be until the end of this study that I shall

be able to offer anything like an adequate reply. At this point I will merely suggest the line that reply will take.

It is one thing to have an experience of an absolute good; it is another to *retain* that good. I suppose that every lover knows that in love he has somehow touched finality: here is a foretaste of his destiny. Yet lovers come to learn that they can only keep the meaning of the experience by letting it go: to try to perpetuate it by dwelling in it is fatal. The meaning of love must be worked out, for love is a metaphysical experience, discovering to one not only the beloved, but making all things new. The new truth has been grasped, but it remains to be assimilated. So with the relation between the mystic and God: if he is to retain what God means he must let God go, or, more accurately, he must surrender the exclusive direction of the mind upon God and establish in the world the God to find whom he left the world. The problem, in short, has arisen from a mistaken inference, the inference that because the value experienced is final therefore the experience of it is final. This does not follow. As a fact, it is just because the value is final that the experience of it cannot be so. It is just because the love of God is disinterested that it has power to transform the individual's world. Here as elsewhere we best serve the relative by aiming at the absolute. "Some men," said Lao-Tze, "make themselves lowly for the sake of conquering; others are lowly and therefore conquer."[19]

[19] The return to the world is not so much part of the mystic's intention as a test of its quality. St. Teresa more than any other

mystic with whose writings I am acquainted insists upon this. As is well known, she was much concerned about the genuineness of her revelations. With characteristic independence she rejected all confessors who did not confirm her own judgment in spiritual affairs; but that judgment itself followed this criterion: Any love of God which does not increase the love for your neighbour is false. *E.g.*, "Il me semble que, dans l'état dont je viens de parler [*i.e.*, l'oraison de quiétude], la volonté doit être unie en quelque manière à celle de Dieu. Mais c'est par les effets et par les oeuvres que l'on connait la vérité de ce qui s'est passé dans l'oraison." Chat. Int., ed. Bouix, p. 318. For similar statements see pp. 328, 354, 355, of the same work.

NOTE

THE TWO EYES OF THE SOUL

THE rather extraordinary use of this image of the two eyes of the soul seems to have had a long history. The earliest example of it that I have discovered is in Origen.

He then addresses to us these words: "If, instead of exercising your senses, you look upwards with the soul; if, turning away the eye of the body, you open the eye of the mind, thus and thus only will you be able to see God." He is not aware that this reference to the two eyes, the eye of the body and the eye of the mind, which he has borrowed from the Greeks, was in use among our own writers; for Moses, in his account of the creation of the world, introduces man before his transgression as both seeing and not seeing: seeing, when it is said of the woman, "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise;" and again not seeing, as when he introduces the serpent saying to the woman, as if she and her husband had been blind, "God knows that on the day that ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened;" and also when it is said, "They did eat and the eyes of both of them were opened." The eyes of sense were then opened, which they had done well to keep shut, that they might not be distracted, and hindered from seeing with the eyes of the mind; and it was those eyes of the mind which in consequence of sin, as I imagine, were then closed, with which they had up to that time enjoyed the delight of beholding God and His paradise. This twofold kind of vision in us was familiar to our Saviour, who says, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they

which see not, might see, and that they which see might be made blind,"—meaning, by the eyes that see not: the eyes of the mind, which are enlightened by His teaching; and the eyes which see are the eyes of sense, which His words do render blind, in order that the soul may look without distraction upon proper objects. All true Christians therefore have the eye of the mind sharpened, and the eye of sense closed; so that each one, according to the degree in which his better eye is quickened, and the eye of sense darkened, sees and knows the Supreme God, and His Son, who is the Word, Wisdom, and so forth. [Contra Celsum, VII, 39.]

It reappears in the *Theologia Germanica*.

Now the created soul of man hath also two eyes. The one is the power of seeing into eternity, the other of seeing into time and the creatures, of perceiving how they differ from each other as aforesaid, of giving life and needful things to the body, and ordering and governing it for the best. But these two eyes of the soul of man cannot both perform their work at once; but if the soul shall see with the right eye into eternity, then the left eye must close itself and refrain from working, and be as though it were dead. For if the left eye be fulfilling its office toward outward things; that is, holding converse with time and the creatures; then must the right eye be hindered in its working; that is, in contemplation. Therefore whosoever will have the one must let the other go; for "no man can serve two masters." [Ch. vii.]

Something like it occurs in Meister Eckhart.

Sant Augustînus sprichet unde mit ime ein heidenischer meister von zwein antlützen der sêlen. Daz ein ist gekêret in dise welt unde zuo dem lîbe, in dem würket si tugent unde

kunst. Daz ander antlütze ist gekêret gerihte in got, in dem ist âne underlâz götlich lieht unde würket dâ inne . . . [Pfeiffer, 110, 21-25; *cf.* 250, 31 ff.]

The organic connection between these two aspects or functions of the soul comes out in Eckhart's repeated statements that God does not destroy 'nature' but completes it. [Wan got ist niht ein zerstoerer der nâtûre, mêr; er vollebringet sî. Pfeiffer, 18, 5 ff. and 573, 3-5.][1]

Passages like these are evidence of the fact that the mystics recognise and accept the necessity for the alternation between God and the world, between contemplation and action. They accept it because they perceive it, more or less clearly, to express a moral requirement. One *ought* to practise the presence of God and one *ought* to return to the world with the fruits of that experience, and these two processes are mutually auxiliary. In other words, the alternation might be seen to be necessary independently of any knowledge of physiological or instinctive rhythms.

To have made this clear is the chief contribution of Delacroix. His whole treatment of the mystical life rests upon conceiving it not merely as a rhythm but as a spiritual *dialectic*. Since, however, he thinks that the proper consummation of the dialectic is a state in which the opposition between the contemplative and the active life is overcome, he regards anything short of this as a 'mysticisme fruste et intermittent.' The alternation is, on his theory, a sign of instability.

The chief difficulty in accepting his theory is that

[1] There is a good summary of Eckhart's teaching on this point in Delacroix, Le Mysticisme spéculatif en Allemagne, p. 217, n. 2.

the necessity for the alternation lies deep in the nature of knowledge and of morality, and indeed pertains to our constitution as finite beings. Even the simplest act of perception is the resultant of separate acts of attention to the whole and to the parts of the object. In mysticism we see one movement in that adjustment to experience through alternate acts of attention to the many and the one. This idea, which is the essential feature of Hocking's interpretation, has been finely expressed by Havelock Ellis.

> All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding in. The man who makes the one or the other his exclusive aim in life will die before he has ever begun to live. The man who has carried one part of the process to excess before turning to the other will learn indeed what life is, and may leave behind him the memory of a pattern saint. But he alone is the wise master of living who from first to last has held the double ideal in true honour. In these, as in other matters, we cannot know the spiritual facts unless we realise the physical facts of life. All life is a building up and a breaking down, a taking in and a giving out, a perpetually anabolic and katabolic rhythm. To live rightly we must imitate both the luxury of Nature and her austerity.[2]

[2] Affirmations, p. 220.

CHAPTER III

UNION WITH GOD

IT is not obvious that union with anything is a supreme good." Yet it is clear that, historically, the idea of union has appealed to a number of different human needs. If there is a common element among these a survey of the more important of them may reveal it.

(1) The desire to get rid of a painful type of self-consciousness often expresses itself as a desire for union with some reality 'outside the self.' This reality may take any one of a number of different forms: it may be the Crowd, or The National Being, or Nature, or God. Union offers a chance to forget oneself. Yet, clearly, self-consciousness is not in itself an evil. It is only when self-consciousness spells awkwardness, in other words when it forms an impediment to successful action, that it clamours to be removed. Thus the desire for union begins to appear as the desire for spontaneity or facility as contrasted with effort. The motive appears in its purity in Taoism. Tao is "the way the universe goes." It goes, so to speak, by not trying to go. Like the Unmoved Mover of Aristotelian theology it acts by being and not by doing. Thus Tao may be said to be an apotheosis of the kind of power that comes from relying upon one's being and not upon one's effort; union with Tao means the tapping of this kind of energy.

(2) But the condemnation of self-consciousness may be more immediate. The aesthetic sense may reject it because it is ugly. Self-consciousness is a centrifugal force in human affairs, making for separatism and discordance; it is concomitant with breaking time, getting out of step, etc., and these things offend the natural love of harmony. The philosophies of Greece give us the classic example of this motive. For Plato the political bond is ultimately indistinguishable from the aesthetic: the final incentive to the loyalty of the individual citizen is the maintenance of the harmony of the ordered political community. Individualism neither looks well nor feels well.

The desire for power easily allies itself with and runs into this aesthetic need. In the feeling of satisfaction that comes, for example, from rowing in time with the seven other members of a crew, it is impossible to say how much of the enjoyment is to be traced to the pure sense of harmony and how much to the feeling that one participates in the one life and movement of the boat. Yet in principle the two feelings or desires are distinguishable.

(3) The ambition for union has sometimes taken a more abstract form than either of the above and one much more difficult to translate into terms of some other ambition. An example is found in primitive Buddhism. Buddhism starts from the doctrine that reality is a flux, describable not in terms of nouns substantive, but only of verbs. The self, as part of this flux, is merely a making and an unmaking. Therefore to believe in the existence of the self with a permanent

identity of its own and to act on that belief by harbouring desires is, as it were, to go against the grain of the universe. The consequent friction makes itself felt as suffering. Nirvana is the state of seeing through the illusion of selfhood and the joy of being 'placed' metaphysically. We seem to have here a sort of ontological ambition. It is hardly accurate to say that the Buddhist desires or achieves union with reality, for the achievement consists in realising that there never was any separation. Yet the desire for union is there in a subtle form. Cancel the thought of the illusion that has been overcome and by how much do you impoverish the meaning of Nirvana? Unless the memory of the eightfold path persists in the final experience that experience is empty. There may never have been a separate individual self which has now been restored to its true place, but there has been an idea of separateness which is overcome in a true insight. Salvation is not the moral union at a moment of time of the independent individual with an independent reality, but the intellectual discovery that this independence has never existed. The adjustment takes place altogether within the region of ideas. In other words, the need for union is still present, but it has been translated into logical terms.

I doubt if we can express this need any less abstractly than by calling it *the need to be real*. Hocking has suggested that Nirvana "is attractive to the Buddhist because of the initiation which it represents into the very moving principles of the cosmos; the love of power has not disappeared into something else, but has

taken the form of an aspiration for metaphysical status with all the power over one's own destiny and over other men's minds there implied."[1] This aspiration is there, as it must be; but it does not seem to me to be so important a factor as the need to be real—without qualification. If, for example, we compare Buddhism with Christianity in this respect it is evident that the conscious ambition for power plays a much greater part in Christianity. The Founder of Christianity, according to the eschatologists, was seeking to bend the processes of history to his own purpose; the God of Christianity is a God who enters into the world as a competing power; Christianity is a missionary religion and union with the Christian God meant union with a Being who was to overcome the world. We know next to nothing about that Reality with which the Buddhist found himself allied, because Buddhism definitely shunned such speculations, but certainly no such positive purpose was attributed to it. Buddhism on the whole was quietistic, defining its good in terms of being and resting. Buddha himself could find no convincing reason for preaching the dharma and, as Hoeffding acutely observes, the real character of Buddhism is revealed by the fact that what Buddha founded was not a church but an order of monks.

(4) What we have so far distinguished as the desire for power and the desire to be real appear in interesting union in the system of Spinoza. The love of God which drives out all other passions is, for Spinoza, admittedly

[1] W. E. Hocking, Human Nature and Its Remaking, p. 334.

a love of power, though not, of course, of power in any competitive sense. But this love of God is an intellectual love, that is, it is the same thing as the desire to discover what, *sub specie eternitatis,* one truly is—an organ of the divine reality. The will to be fully real is the same as the will to power because real existence is itself a form of power. Anything is independently real to the extent to which that force by which it maintains itself in existence is self-derived. Until my actions can be explained by reference to myself alone the actions are not mine but, in part, the actions of external things upon me. Therefore until I can discover my real self and be determined in my conduct by that, I am relatively impotent. But what am I really? A necessary function of the Absolute, answers Spinoza. Thus my power and my reality are the same thing and both of them turn out to be derivative.

In the demand, then, for union with God or with some 'larger' reality we may detect these two strands of ambition: the desire to be real and the desire for power. Let us consider the first of these.

The desire to be real! That, I admit, is not, in spite of our attempts to elucidate it, a very promising formula for the mystical ambition. It is far too nebulous. Yet in the search for more clarity and precision it is well to remember that there are necessary limits to what we may hope to achieve. We can never clear our renderings of these ultimate concepts from vagueness and impressionism. Anything that could be defined as the highest good would not be the highest good.

It is not difficult to discern the reasons for this paradox. The will can only be commanded by some ideal which possesses it, which therefore it does not wholly possess. My will—that by which I am moved—is my idea making itself known to me, gradually assuming the definite outline of idea. Since it is the need for definiteness that urges me on—the need for reaching a point where I can say: There, that is what I wanted!—the condition of advance is that my object should not be completely known. It is because I cannot declare what I want that I continue to want it. On the other hand, it is a fact of familiar observation that once an idea has become definite it loses some of its hold upon us. Every attainment is accompanied by a feeling of disappointment: the curtain comes down upon the climax: life has temporarily ceased to be dramatic. The moment when an ideal becomes an idea is a moment of birth, but like every birth it brings with it a feeling of loss. That which was part of me has entered the world of objects, now belongs to the 'not-self,' has its name and status there, and will never again have the same power over me. Thus there is wisdom in the natural human shrinking from any answer to ultimate questions which smacks of finality. We know intuitively that any scheme which too nicely prescribes our destiny will have missed the essence of the matter.[2]

[2] In Shaw's play, Androcles and the Lion, the Roman Captain urges the Christian, Lavinia, to burn the incense. He says to her: "What you are facing is certain death. You have nothing left now but your faith in this craze of yours: this Christianity. Are your Christian fairy stories any truer than our stories about Jupiter and Diana . . . ? *Lav.* . . . A man cannot die for a story and a dream.

But while these considerations should lead us not to expect too much definiteness either from the mystics or their interpreters they do not constitute a justification in advance for any particular degree of indefiniteness. We must try to get more light.

Men take most things for granted—their health, their friendships, their temperament, their happiness. Apart from some misfortune or catastrophe which may suddenly reveal that all these things are accidents and that the world does not *owe* them their well-faring, they do not enquire too closely into the validity of their claims upon Fortune. They take things as they come and are not troubled by scruples. And their confidence extends to the future as well as to the present. If they are not now concerned to know about the sinister aspect which the world presents to others not so happily situated as themselves, neither are they concerned to anticipate the future complexion of things. "Why borrow trouble?" "Sufficient unto the day . . ." "We will cross that bridge when we come to it." Perhaps the thing we dread will not come to pass, or, if it does,

None of us believed the stories and the dreams more devoutly than poor Spintho; but he could not face the great reality. What he would have called my faith has been oozing away minute by minute whilst I've been sitting here, with reality becoming realler and realler, with stories and dreams fading away into nothing. *Capt.* Are you then going to die for nothing? *Lav.* Yes: that is the wonderful thing. It is since all the stories and dreams have gone that I have now no doubt at all that I must die for something greater than dreams or stories. *Capt.* But for what? *Lav.* I don't know. If it were for anything small enough to know, it would be too small to die for. I think I'm going to die for God. Nothing else is real enough to die for. *Capt.* What is God? *Lav.* When we know that, Captain, we shall be Gods ourselves."

either we shall find that the reality is not so bad as the anticipation or the emergency will arouse in us energies sufficient to deal with it.

To a great extent this attitude is necessary in the normal economy of living. We cannot afford to justify each step in advance. It is with life as with learning to swim: we must first make the experiment before discovering that the water will support us—and life is a continual experiment. Too much reflection produces a disease of its own: to know all might engender a pessimism that would paralyse movement. "Ye shall know the truth—and the truth will make you mad."

Yet much of this attitude we should recognise for what it is—a wilful ignoring of the ugly and the dangerous, a living in a Fools' Paradise, a crying of peace where there is not and ought not to be peace.

Now the refusal to take life on such easy terms is a characteristic mark of the mystic temperament. Mystics are scrupulous,—to the workaday judgment, overscrupulous. They will own nothing of this world's goods unless they can own them by right. They must look into the titles to all property. Hence they are precariously attached to homely earth. It needs but a touch to set them off upon some radical enterprise. They are ascetics, in the sense that the ascetic is one who wants to know and suffer the worst in order to try if by any chance he may be man enough to meet it. In short they have a passionate need to know once for all where and how they stand in this universe. They will come to terms with destiny or be broken in the attempt. And this is what I mean by the desire to be real.

The ambition remains the same under diverse forms. If Reality is flux and the self a weaving and unweaving of *skandhas,* then it is blessedness to win this insight, to know that the last illusion has been destroyed. Here is initiation, here the end of rebirth and suffering. Here the flux meets no resistance. If we think in terms of God rather than of the flux, then finding God means finding one's most real Object and this in turn means finding one's real self. In this Presence there can be no reservations: one is thrown back upon one's ultimate substance. And this is the beginning of the individual's freedom, for however further God is to be defined He is at least the God of the whole universe, He is the point from which reality can be dealt with in its totality. Union with such a being would mean the ability to confront the universe as He may be supposed to confront it, not denying but mastering the evil there. Henceforth, through all vicissitudes of good and evil fortune, one would *know where one stood.*

The second element in the meaning of union with God we called the desire for power. The power in question is a peculiar power, not at all comparable to that which might be conferred by reliance upon a God who is worker of miracles or supernatural substitute for human labour. But before we can justify this statement we must first analyse the meaning of the mystic's passivity. This will form the topic of the chapter which follows.

CHAPTER IV

PASSIVITY AND ITS MEANING

IT is obvious that any attempt to deny the will in all special forms, such as the mystic frankly undertakes, has its dangers. The abandonment of effort thereby involved will of itself afford a kind of relief and bring with it positive enjoyments whose seductiveness is potent.

> How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
> With half-shut eyes ever to seem
> Falling asleep in a half-dream!

The lotus will never lose its enchantment—and the lotus grows near to the true paradise. The mystics in their journey skirt the edge of that sleepy land and many have wandered into it. But they have been quite aware of the danger. They have been quick to reject quietism as a false doctrine. Here, for example, is a typical statement by Fénelon upon this subject.

> C'est une volonté positive et formelle qui nous fait vouloir ou désirer réellement toute volonté de Dieu qui nous est connue. Ce n'est point une indolence stupide, une inaction intérieure, une non-volonté, une suspension générale, un equilibre perpétuel de l'âme. [*Maximes des Saints,* art. xxiv.]

And this is from the man of whose religion Emile Faguet has written, "Etre uni, uni à Dieu, et uni en Dieu, n'avoir d'autre volonté que la sienne et vouloir qu'il veuille pour nous, s'absorber, se dissoudre, être

un torrent qui glisse en lui et s'y abandonne: voilà l'extrême, je dis l'extrême, mais voilà bien le terme où tend sans cesse la pensée religieuse de Fénelon."[1]

We are taken a little nearer to the reason for such disclaimers by a mystic who in his own time and country had to deal with similar perversions of mystical practice. St. John of the Cross, in enumerating five sins against which beginners in the spiritual life are warned, lays stress on what he calls spiritual "voluptuousness" and "gluttony." He means by this to condemn all search for a merely passive type of enjoyment. It is to just such a failure in the purity of the moral intention that he attributes the horrors of the Dark Night of the Soul.

But for the most acute discrimination between the 'true' and the 'false' passivity we must turn to Ruysbroeck. The passage which follows I have quoted in full partly because of its analytical power, partly because it shows quite clearly that the distinction is not prompted by a mere desire for orthodoxy but is the report of one who knows whereof he speaks.

> Every man who is not drawn and enlightened of God is not touched by love, and has neither the active cleaving with desire nor the simple and loving tendency to fruitive rest. And therefore such a one cannot unite himself with God; for all those who live without supernatural love are inclined towards themselves and seek their rest in outward things. For all creatures by their nature tend towards rest: and therefore rest is sought both by the good and the evil in divers ways.

[1] Dix-Septième Siècle, Etudes Littéraires, p. 347.

Now mark this: when a man is bare and imageless in his senses, and empty and idle in his higher powers, he enters into rest through mere nature; and this rest may be found and possessed within themselves in mere nature by all creatures, without the grace of God, whenever they can strip themselves of images and of all activity. But in this the loving man cannot find his rest, for charity and the inward touch of God's grace will not be still: and so the inward man cannot long remain in natural rest within himself.

But now mark the way in which this natural rest is practised. It is a sitting still without either outward or inward acts, in vacancy, in order that rest may be found and may be untroubled. But a rest which is practised in this way is unlawful; for it brings with it in men a blindness and ignorance, and a sinking down into themselves without activity. Such a rest is naught else than idleness, into which the man has fallen and in which he forgets himself and God and all things in all that has to do with activity. This rest is wholly contrary to the supernatural rest which one possesses in God; for that is a loving self-mergence joined to a simple gazing into the Incomprehensible Brightness. This rest in God, which is actively sought with inward longing, and is found in fruitive inclination, and is eternally possessed in the self-mergence of love, and which, when possessed, is sought none the less: this rest is exalted above the rest of mere nature as greatly as God is exalted above all creatures. . . .

In this bare vacancy the rest is pleasant and great. This rest is in itself no sin; for it exists in all men by nature, whenever they make themselves empty. But when a man wishes to practise and possess it without acts of virtue, he falls into spiritual pride and a self-complacency, from which

he seldom recovers. [*Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage,* Book II, ch. lvi, trans. by C. A. Wynschenk Dom.]

Ruysbroeck here distinguishes two marks of the 'true' passivity: first, it is 'actively sought,' that is, a certain effort is necessary to maintain it. Second, it differs from any natural or automatic type of relief by the moral preparation which precedes it. The negation of the will is a negation of *self*-will. Leaving the consideration of this point until later let us turn to the first.

This enforced waiting, this self-imposed receptivity, which is the defining mark of the stage of contemplation, is not the end of the mystic's career. It is the end of his efforts, in the sense that he can do no more, but it is destined to give way to the stage of ecstasy when matters are taken out of the hand of the individual and he becomes the vehicle of a power greater than himself. "Remain steadfastly in thyself until thou art drawn out of thyself without any act of thine."

Even if the mystics themselves had not underlined this distinction between the two periods in their experience this preparatory aspect of passivity would be clear from the images they have employed to describe it: one is in the house of the Master and is waiting for the Master to appear, or one waits for the sign from the choragus to begin the dance, or the mirror of the soul is to be polished so that it may reflect the divine light, or the window of the soul is to be made clean so that it may allow the divine rays to pass through, or the soul is to become 'souple à l'impulsion divine.' What these metaphors are describing is a state of

breathless attention, a hard-earned and hard-held waiting for the divine revelation and the divine onset.

With the observation that the mystic's passivity is preparatory we begin to see the limits which he sets to the final efficacy of his preparation. He knows that it contains no infallible prescription for *making* God appear. No matter how rigorous the moral discipline may have been he makes no claim to be able to 'force the hand of God.' Like the poet he knows that

> Vision will mate him not by law and vow.

The achievement is never wholly earned; as in the mystic there remains a saving measure of humility, so in the revelation there is a touch, if not of mystery, at least of divine generosity. "And to it none can attain through knowledge and subtlety, neither through any exercise whatever. Only he with whom it pleases God to be united in His Spirit, and whom it pleases Him to enlighten by Himself, can see God, and no one else."[2]

But if the moral preparation is not a sufficient, it is still a necessary, condition of salvation. Without purity of heart there is no seeing of God. And this is what Ruysbroeck has in mind in distinguishing the true from the false rest. The latter is mere idleness, to be won by any means; it is certainly not controlled by any disinterested love of God. It is the sleep which follows on spiritual lotus-eating, a sleep and a re-creation which is not even partly earned. Even if it results in an enhancement of power the connection between that

[2] Ruysbroeck, *op. cit.*, Book III, ch. i.

increment and what has gone before will remain a precarious bond.[8]

Granted that the mystic is waiting for the revelation of God, the question then arises, What does he look to God to do for him? One thing is clear: he does not expect God to accomplish any particular thing: God's grace is not a substitute for the work required of the individual in solving any practical or intellectual problem. This is the meaning of the invariable injunction to suppress all special desires, such as appears in the following quotations.

He . . . must be unencumbered, and as empty of every outward work as if he did not work at all: for if his emptiness is troubled within by some work of virtue, he has an image; and as long as this endures within him, he cannot contemplate. [Ruysbroeck, *op. cit.*, Book III, ch. i.]

Und wenn man das gewahr wird, dass der Herr da ist, so soll man das ganze Werk Gott befohlen seyn lassen, und dem Herrn sich ganz hingehen; ja, alle Kräfte sollen ihm schweigen. Denn alle Gedanken und Werke des Menschen hindern Gott. Deswegen soll der Mensch nichts anderes thun, als dass er Gott leide. [Tauler, Pred. III, p. 28. *Am Tage der Geburt Maria.*]

For after such a fashion doth God place the soul in this

[8] Even among the Christian mystics there are some to whom the above statements do not apply, *e.g.*, Meister Eckhart. There seems to be no place in his system for anything like "grace." He often speaks as though the conclusion of the mystic's preparation and union with God were one and the same thing. This position was inevitable if Eckhart really meant to assert the identity of 'the ground of the soul' and God, for in that event the final mystic attainment can only be the discovery of this identity. Delacroix, Le Mysticisme Spéculatif en Allemagne au Quatorzième Siècle, p. 211, note, and p. 215, note, has some valuable remarks on this point.

state and by so different a road doth He lead her, that if she is fain to take action of herself and make use of her own powers, rather doth she hinder than assist the operation that God is working in her. [St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul,* trans. Cunninghame Graham, p. 75.]

A good intention often impedes true union. [Suso, *Life,* trans. by T. F. Knox, p. 218.]

Establish thyself in absolute detachment; for an unbounded longing, even for what is divine, when it is excessive, may become a secret obstacle. [*Ib.,* p. 222.]

It is obvious that these writers are guarding against the danger of taking God as a worker of miracles. Mystical practice is not a business of looking up the answers at the end of the book of life, nor is union with God a short cut to either knowledge or virtue. It was just because such groups as The Brethren of the Free Spirit in the fourteenth century insisted on taking their religious life as a sort of "divine somnambulism" and regarded the will of God as wholly displacing the human will that they met with violent opposition from the exponents of a saner discipline.

But a paradox still remains. If God is not a substitute for individual effort, if some differential activity is still to persist, how is that compatible with the apparent rejection of all effort?

The paradox is only superficial. We know what it is to lose faith in the value of our work: the tide of enthusiasm which floated us on has ebbed: inspiration has given place to drudgery. When we come to such a pass there is no use in reminding ourselves of the abstract theoretical truth that our work has value. A

creed is no substitute for a conviction, nor will it profit us to recall the hours when our faith was vigorous. All such deliberate effort only intensifies the hopelessness with which we stare into our task. That method we must abandon, and if we are to recapture our ardour it must be by coming into the presence of some equivalent enthusiasm: we must kindle our torch at the flame of another's faith. Again, we know the futility of trying to 'look on the bright side of things.' What is the good of my reassuring myself that God is in Heaven when as a fact I cannot see Him? Such damned iteration will raise a din but never kindle a spark. For *that* I must seek out some believer whose faith is visibly *at work* and who accepts the worth of human tasks without question or reserve. I trust his judgment to communicate itself to me as an empirical revelation of value. Whenever I seek such solution of my difficulties I am not asking that other individual to do my work for me—I am looking for the revaluation of *that effort with which I work.* In short what I am in search of is not information but inspiration. But what we have here been describing is in principle the mystic's predicament and its solution. His rejection of the world is a confession that he has lost faith in the value of *everything:* nothing is good enough for him, nothing *absorbs* him. From this frustration his own efforts cannot deliver him: he must recover his sense of worth in the world's work by some immediate contact with the Being whose interest in this world presumably constitutes its divinity.[4]

[4] I return to the consideration of this problem in chapter x.

PART II
REVELATION

CHAPTER V

THE MYSTIC CLAIM

THAT the mystic claims to have received knowledge in the ecstatic experience is not disputed by any student of the subject. For the mystic himself the experience is never merely emotional or subjective—it is a revelation of Truth. Even when they have been unable to understand how knowledge could have befallen them, since they seem to have annihilated the very conditions in which knowledge is possible, they have not abandoned their original certainty. They have either given up the attempt to explain it or, more frequently, have postulated some special organ of knowledge for the perception of supernatural truth. For an example of the first procedure we may take the following from Teresa. She is speaking of 'ravissement.' "Ceci n'est pas comme un évanouissement où l'on est privé de tout connaissance. . . . Ce que je sais, moi, des ames ainsi ravies, c'est que jamais elles ne furent plus éveillées aux choses de Dieu, ni plus éclairées sur son excellence souveraine." She points out the difficulty of seeing how, when all the avenues of sense have been closed and the operations of the discursive reason suspended, there can be any knowledge. And she goes on, "Je n'en sais rien, vous répondrai-je, et peut-être personne n'en sait-il plus que moi."[1] The following illustrates the appeal to a special organ of religious knowl-

[1] Chat. Int. Oeuvres, ed. Bouix, vol. III, pp. 391-192.

edge. "In this supernatural manner the soul knows God in the depths of her being, and she *sees* Him, so to say, more clearly than she sees the material light with the eyes of the body. . . . Neither the senses, nor the imagination, have the least part in this vision; all takes place in the summit of the spirit."[2]

The object of this chapter is not to test the claim but to analyse it in order to discover what is involved in it.

Revelation! Neither the word nor the thing is in good standing among us today. It smacks of magic. There is something repugnant in the idea of knowledge to be gained by ways other than those accredited in science and philosophy, by short cuts and back-door methods. We will give the name of knowledge only to that which we have gained by intelligible means, to which, therefore, we are so far entitled. Moreover, revelation suggests a private and peculiar wisdom and, consequently, a privileged class of initiates,—recipients and guardians of the revelation. But we have come to believe that there cannot be a monopoly of truth or of any part of it any more than there can be a monopoly of culture. In short, it is the esoteric in mysticism that makes us almost unwilling even to give a hearing to its claims.

But let us first make clear what those claims are. And here it will be well to have before us a few typical mystical utterances, less to serve as evidence than to remind us of a general flavour.

And I saw and knew the whole working essence, in the

[2] Alvarez de Paz, Works, vol. III, Book V, ch. xiv. Quoted by Poulain, The Graces of Interior Prayer, ch. xviii.

evil and in the good, and the mutual origin and existence; and likewise how the fruitful bearing womb of eternity brought forth. . . . For I had a thorough view of the universe as in a chaos, wherein all things are couched and wrapped up, but it was impossible for me to explicate the same. [Quoted from Boehme by James, *Varieties of Religious Experience,* p. 411.]

Étant un jour en oraison, il me fut en un instant représenté de quelle manière toutes les choses se voient et sont contenues en Dieu. Je ne les apercevais pas sous leurs propres formes, et néansmoins la vue que j'en avais était d'une entière clarté: tenter de la décrire serait impossible. [Teresa, *Life,* ch. xl; Bouix, vol. I, pp. 524-525.]

Here it was as a flash of lightning, or as though a curtain were drawn aside to allow of a momentary sight of some wonderful treasures and were then suddenly replaced. God thus showed me the infinite immensity and incomprehensibility of His Being, but my small capacity could not bear all that it saw in that instant of time. . . . No language can describe the secret marvels that are there wrought between God and the soul, or the grandeur of God which is there manifested. [Ven. Marina de Escobar. *Life,* vol. I, Book III, ch. i. Quoted by Poulain, *Graces of Interior Prayer,* ch. xviii.]

The sublimest wealth of the spirit in its own proper form consists in this: that being now freed from the weight of sin, it soars upwards in the might of God into its divinely illuminated reason, where it enjoys a perpetual flux of heavenly consolations. It can now behold the secret relations of things. [Suso, *Life,* ch. liii.]

And the moment such a soul places itself in the presence of God it makes an act of knowledge confused, loving, peaceful and tranquil wherein it drinks in wisdom, love and

sweetness. [St. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Book II, ch. xiv.]

But when the soul doth feel the presence of God more deeply than is customary then doth it certify unto itself that He is within it; it doth feel it, I say, with an understanding so marvellous and so profound, and with such great love and divine fire, that it loseth all love for itself and for the body, and it speaketh and knoweth and understandeth those things of the which it hath never heard from any mortal whatsoever. And it understandeth with great illumination, and with much difficulty doth it hold its peace. [*The Book of Divine Consolations of the Blessed Angela of Foligno,* p. 25.]

When I behold and am in that Good, I remember nothing of the humanity of Christ, of God, inasmuch as he was man, nor of aught else that was shaped or formed and albeit I seem to see nothing yet do I see all things. [*The Book of Divine Consolations of the Blessed Angela of Foligno,* p. 184.]

It is superfluous to multiply examples. Let me proceed at once to the more satisfying task of analysis.

(1) It is quite clear from these quotations that the mystic is an initiate, one to whom has been granted a view of The Inside. To him the doors have been opened; from his eyes the veils have fallen; he has been a sharer in the counsels of The Most High. He knows the secret, then. But this secret is not the guarded treasure of an esoteric cult: it is "one which the religious spirit tries not to keep but to give away." It is like the secret of the lover, whose love, illuminating the universe, fills him with missionary zeal towards those who sit in darkness. It is like the secret of the

artist. "The sight never beheld it, nor has the hand expressed it; it is an ideal residing in the breast of the artist which he is always labouring to impart and which he dies at last without imparting."[3] This labour to impart, a desire, of a truly feverish intensity, to express the inexpressible, is one of the most obvious things about the mystics. Their revelation, whatever else is to be said about it, makes no claim to be any *private* truth.

(2) Nor does it claim any novelty. William James and others have pointed out the resemblance between mystical insight and those experiences in which we realise afresh or for the first time some ancient truth. It 'dawns' on us or we 'wake up' to it. Here it has been tumbling about at our feet, like Justice in The Republic, and we never saw it until now. This quality of *recognition* in the mystical revelation is signalised in most interesting fashion by Plotinus. He makes a distinction between the experience of Beauty and that of the One. The former is always accompanied by surprise and amazement. Of the latter he writes,

> But one must not ask, Whence comes it? For there is no question of whence. For it neither comes nor goes, but it appears and it does not appear. Therefore one should not pursue it, but having prepared himself to behold it, should quietly wait until it appears, as the eyes await the rays of the sun. . . . It comes not as though one looked for it, but it comes as one who does not come . . . so that one is at a loss to tell whence it has appeared, from within or

[3] Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourses on Art, Quoted by Palgrave, Introd. to Golden Treasury.

from without; and when it has passed one says: After all it was within; and yet it was not within. [*Enn.*, I, iii, 2, and *Enn.*, V, v, 8. *Cf. Enn.*, I, vi, 4.]

The mystic, every mystic, declares that he has discovered—God! Hardly a new insight this, it would seem, nor yet one to be proclaimed to all mankind as an unheard-of revelation. Indeed, there is a naïveté here akin to that of lovers, every pair of whom is, in their own eyes, the first pair, while a sophisticated world watches and reflects that this sort of thing has now been going on for a long time. In short, there is nothing original in mystic knowledge unless indeed originality consists not so much in the discovery of the new as in the rediscovery of the eternal.

(3) But, though in one sense public and even obvious as a platitude, the mystic insight is not to be won without a certain preparation of the will, above all of the moral will. One might hastily infer from this that the mystic has hit upon a method, or shall we not frankly say a dodge, for discovering truth which can be discovered in no other way. Yet we may observe that, in general, we are not unfamiliar with the idea that in all cognitive enterprises there are definite ways of approach to be considered. The truth is not to be won by violence. Some social virtues, we think, are required of any man who is to find his way to an understanding of his subject. Impartiality, dispassionateness, sincerity, some touch of reverence, perhaps,—in the honourable code of the modern investigator all these find their place. We insist upon them above all in the truths of human relationship and in judgments

upon art and religion. Let a man refuse to conform to the necessary conditions here, and the result will be to impress upon us not so much what he has made of these things as what they have made of him. And the meaning of this is that we must find a place in the theory of knowledge for the category of *response*.

An illustration may help to explain this point.

You have heard, let us say, of the anaesthetic revelation. In the hope of gaining an intellectual illumination you inhale nitrous oxide gas. Revelation, of a sort, comes. That is not response; it is not even espionage; it is magic. You discover no connection between your experiment and its result, between doing something to your body and receiving something into your mind. Indeed, you do not really receive it into your mind at all, because your mind was precisely what was not prepared to receive it. And this is proved by the fact that, whatever certainties may be vouchsafed to you in the revelation, you cannot retain them afterwards.

Again, you discover that there are certain conditions in which you think best and work best: you know the temperature or the amount of sleep or food or exercise most favourable to your mental activity. You are careful to observe these conditions. This is admittedly not open to the same criticism. Why? The chief reason is that the bodily conditions are not held to be sufficient; they are simply negative conditions without which mental activity in general would not take place, and it is this activity—"the flow of ideas"—which is your primary object. But we have not yet reached the stage of response.

You have been working upon an intellectual problem and you have got "stuck." Taught by past experience you know when to abandon a type of effort which has become worse than useless and simply to wait for the 'inspiration.' This, in spite of the element of mysteriousness,—an element which is not removed by calling it subconscious,—is response. The solving idea *completes* your efforts in the moment when it reveals to you their true direction. "This is what I have been looking for all along." The revelation when it comes is wholly continuous with your meaning. The solution is a real solution and no mere interruptive 'communication,' because you had first learned to formulate the problem aright.

In dealing with the special preparation of the mystic and its culmination we are dealing with a response of this kind. It differs from other types of response in that the mystic's object, God, is primarily an object of love and the preparation essentially a moral one. But for our present purpose these distinctions are not important; what is important is that there is nothing magical about the mystical revelation and that the same category of response which is valid in other departments of knowledge holds good also for the knowledge of the religious object.

(4) Whatever truth the mystics have come upon it is not any particular truth. They have of course received a formidable number of revelations, but their typical achievement in this respect and the one universally celebrated among them is not to be defined as an item or group of items to be added to our stock of

scientific and philosophical knowledge. If one reads again those quotations at the beginning of the chapter it is clear that one is dealing with a knowledge of some *total*—"the whole working essence," "the meaning of the whole," is somehow given at once. This is what they are trying to declare by their constant use of such terms as wayless, pathless, abysmal, modeless, to describe the form of their knowledge and by referring to its content as a darkness, a wilderness, etc. If we take the discursive reason as a source of "light," then, judged by that standard, the mystic knowledge is darkness.

Some of them have gone further than merely negative terms to exhibit the contrast. One of the most striking statements of this kind by an individual mystic is to be found in Julian of Norwich. "And after this," she says, "I saw God in a Point, that is to say in mine understanding,—by which I saw that He is in all things." The meaning of this appears later in her account. She was tempted to ask for a particular item of knowledge, about the "spiritual faring" of a friend.

> And in this desire for a singular Shewing it seemed that I hindered myself: for I was not taught in this time. And then I was answered in my reason, as it were, by a friendly intervenor: Take it generally and behold the graciousness of the Lord God as he sheweth to thee: for it is more worship to God to behold Him in all than in any special thing. . . . For the fullness of Joy is to behold God in *all* . . . And the ground of this was shewed in the First [revelation], and more openly in the Third, where it saith, 'I saw God in a Point.' [*Revelations of Divine Love,* chaps. ii. and xxxv.]

The distinction between mystical and other kinds of knowledge has been elaborated by St. John of the Cross. According to him there are two kinds of "spiritual, supernatural knowledge: one distinct and special; the other confused, obscure and general. . . . The second kind . . . has but one form, that of contemplation, which is the work of faith."[4] "In one way the soul receives the knowledge of one, two, or three truths; but in the other the Wisdom of God generally, which is His Son, in one simple, universal knowledge, communicated to the soul by faith."[5]

So far we have been undertaking to describe only the form of the mystic knowledge. But what of its content?

The first effect made upon a reader of those quotations given at the beginning of the chapter is likely to have been one of dizziness. These people are whirling too persistently round something of mighty import. If they would only stop for a moment one might get a chance to see It. Or shall we say that we have to do with a group whose stammering betokens either a natural defect or a cult? This impression is likely to be deepened by an extended acquaintance with mystical literature.

Yet, on scrutiny, I think we can detect two distinct causes for their jubilation and excitement: first, an actual attainment; second, a prophetic attainment.

(1) The mystics have declared that the God whom they sought has made himself known to them in direct

[4] Ascent of Mount Carmel, Book II, ch. x.
[5] *Ib.*, ch. xxix.

presence. This seems to constitute more than half the burden of their revelation; this is the announcement to which they return with wearying, if unwearied repetition. When they try to tell more they grow inarticulate. *That* they know is painfully evident; what they know does not emerge.

This predicament of theirs has led some writers to suggest that the experience is identical in kind with those dream states in which we possess the form of certainty without any content. A fairer comparison, I think, is the experience in which some familiar truth becomes immediately experienced fact, when, for example, "all men are mortal" becomes "I too must die." In such cases the familiar truth is seen to concern *me,* a law of nature to have its point of contact with my individual destiny. What thereupon becomes important, because novel, is not the thing found but the finding. When the truth or the object in question has been long sought for and is highly prized then the discovery or the experiencing of it, although it may add nothing to its content, properly calls for celebration. Art is the natural human form for this to take. One must dance out or sing out one's discovery. Here, for example, is the poet in presence of the spring—an ancient and by this time presumably a familiar phenomenon:

> Though even the sight that salutes them again and adores them awhile is blest,
> And the heart is a hymn, and the sense is a soul, and the soul is a song.[6]

[6] Swinburne, Hawthorntide.

Or again,

> In such access of mind, in such high hours
> Of visitation from the living God
> Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
> No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
> Rapt into still communion that transcends
> The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
> His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
> That made him, it was blessedness and love.[7]

When we come to the more pronounced type of mystical experience it need not surprise us to find religious knowledge indistinguishable from a kind of religious lyricism.

> It is said that the nightingale is given to song and melody all night, that she may please him to whom she is joined. How mickle more should I sing with greatest sweetness to Christ my Jesu, that is Spouse of my soul through all this present life that is night in regard to the clearness to come, so that I should languish in longing and die for love. But in dying I shall wax strong, and in heat I shall be nourished; and I shall joy and in joying sing the likings of love with mirth, and hot devotion as it were from a pipe shall issue and my soul shall yield angels' melody, kindled within, to the most high, and offered by the mouth at the altar of God's praise. [Richard Rolle, *The Fire of Love,* Book II, ch. xii.]

Revelation here is merged in adoration and we can see why this is so. As Hocking says, "Song and poetry are forms which infinitely repeatable truth must take: they

[7] Wordsworth, Excursion I.

thus become the mystic's specialty, and revelation must consist largely of the song of God."[8]

(2) The essence of that transition from truth conventionally accepted to truth personally apprehended might be expressed in this way: "All men are mortal" leaves me indifferent; "I too must die" means that *something has to be done about it,* possibly something in the way of overt action, even if it be nothing more unusual than making a will, certainly something in the way of reflection. None of the familiar assumptions of living may remain unaffected by this discovery. It is some awareness of the remote bearings of this knowledge upon thought and conduct, some prophetic assurance that in order to assimilate it we shall have to make over our whole body of ideas, that makes it seem at once momentous and mysterious.

But in seeking analogies to mystical illumination we need not confine ourselves to illustrations of this kind; the mystics themselves have described their attainment as a seeing into the meaning of the universe, a seeing of how all things belong together. They have found the clue.

The experience in which one finds the clue or the hypothesis, in which the idea dawns on us, has two marks. First, the attention is fixed almost exclusively upon the solving idea and hardly at all upon the many facts which it is destined to explain. It is defined, of course, as the explanation of these facts, but for the

[8] The Meaning of God in Human Experience, p. 452. *Cf.* James, Varieties, pp. 420-421, and Pratt, The Religious Consciousness, p. 468.

moment the mind is concerned with identification rather than with definition.

Second, clues are things to be *followed up;* hypotheses have to be tested and made good; ideas have to be worked out. At the moment we are only confusedly aware of the working out that has to be done: what we insist upon is that we have got hold of that which is to be worked out. When pressed to declare what we have got hold of we find ourselves relatively helpless: we can only chatter about "profound insights" and report the discovery of something teeming with significance. It would be easy of course to take our crowding asseverations as indicating the form of certainty without the content, but it would not necessarily be just.

I suggest therefore that here we have the proper analogy to the mystic's intuition; that we should take his utterances as constituting a claim to possess a clue to the nature of reality, a clue which can be defined only by exhibiting those things to which it is the clue—that is, by making connections between it and the rest of our knowledge by whatever means attained.

The certainty of the presence of God, the certainty of having found the clue to reality—these, in briefest formulation, compose the mystics' cognitive claim. The purpose of this chapter has only been to describe, by whatever aids we could muster, what that claim is. The testing of it is another task.

NOTE

THE ECSTASY AND UNCONSCIOUSNESS

A PRELIMINARY difficulty which I have not considered in the foregoing chapter stands in the way of any theory of mystical revelation. The difficulty is this: The conditions of the ecstatic state, it is said, are such as to rule out the possibility of any knowledge being contained in it. Mystical simplification reaches its climax in a consciousness of one thing—God; but, to repeat the ancient truism, to be conscious of one thing only is not to be conscious. Consequently we are not surprised to find some mystics declaring that the ecstasy involves a complete, if brief, disappearance of consciousness.

In trying to reach a conclusion upon this difficult matter the following considerations are important.

(1) As against the statements from the mystics asserting that they were unconscious during ecstasy must be set such statements as those quoted at the beginning of the chapter in which the noetic quality of the experience is emphasised.

(2) One may try to reconcile the two sets of statements as Leuba does. He maintains that on the return to consciousness the temporary discontinuity of ecstasy is interpreted by the mystic as having been a consciousness of nothing, a nothing which is then identified with the ineffable One of mystical philosophy. As Delacroix puts it, "ce vide de conscience, ce rien, devenu objet de pensée pour la conscience revenue, prend existence et

devient le rien qui est. Cette confusion permet de diviniser l'inconscience de l'extase, d'assimiler une pseudo-expérience à une doctrine."[1] I agree with Leuba that the mystics mix doctrine with their reports of experience; but that is precisely why we should regard their reports with a critical eye. They are eager, as we have seen, to differentiate their knowledge from discursive reasoning, and in emphasising this distinction they have made use of a doctrine ancient enough in Christian mysticism at any rate, the doctrine that, as Clement of Alexandria expresses it, God is to be sought as Moses sought him—in darkness. The constant recurrence of the same metaphors and the same images shows that we are dealing with theory and tradition as well as with first-hand experience. Consequently I am inclined to reverse the order of importance attached by Leuba to these two factors and to say that the traditional formulation of the mystics' preparation has coloured their reports of their experiences, leading them to declare a complete suspension of consciousness where in fact there may have been no such thing.

In the absence of further evidence, however, such a preference of one factor as prior may well seem arbitrary. And that evidence cannot be particularised here, for in one sense it must consist of one's judgment of mysticism as a whole. If you grant that the most acute and faithful scrutiny of ecstasy, whether by the mystics themselves or their observers, leaves it still an open question whether consciousness has there lapsed

[1] Etudes d'Histoire et de Psychologie du Mysticisme, p. 382.

or not, your opinion (if you are going to decide) must in the last resort be determined by some comprehensive view of the mystic life in its entirety. For my own part, I cannot believe that any experience which is not only followed by, but necessitates a return to, "the world," with an invigorated grasp upon its manifold interests, can ever have involved a total surrender of that world in idea or in any other fashion. Ecstasy is more than an interruption in life, and therefore it is not reasonable to suppose that discontinuity has been complete. The final evidence therefore must wait until the argument of this essay is before us in its entirety.[2]

[2] I stated above that for empirical psychology the question is still an open one. In support of this statement I quote some divergent opinions. Delacroix who gives an extended discussion of this matter [Etudes, pp. 381 ff.], writes: "Sur la question de fait, il nous semble que le témoignage des mystiques est en faveur de la persistence d'une certaine forme de conscience" (p. 383). Flournoy says, "Beaucoup font un moment d'inconscience absolue. . . . D'autres, au contraire, habitués aux conceptions de la psychologie subliminale, estiment que le trou laissé par la trance dans les souvenirs du sujet n'est qu'apparent, et concerne seulement son moi ordinaire. . . . En pratique, et comme 'hypothèse de travail,' je n'hésite pas à préférer le second point de vue." [Archiv. de Psych., XV, pp. 178 ff.] De Montmorand maintains that the utterances of the mystics are too definite and precise "pour qu'on hésite à les prendre au sens littéral quand on y voit que la 'contemplation pure'—l'extase à son degré supérieur—implique la cessation de toute opération intellectuelle, ou du moins de toute opération discursive." [Psychologie des Mystiques, p. 178.]

CHAPTER VI

THE IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

THE mystic declares that he has seen God. The relationship has been intimate and direct,—I-and-Thou between the soul and God. What are we, as sober enquirers, to make of this experience?

I have to confess at the outset to a certain prejudice in this matter which makes a fair judgment hard to come at. I do not like the idea of a God who unbends to me personally. There is something stuffy and provincial in the thought that *my* salvation is important in the scheme of things. This, after all, is a republican Deity, ready to shake hands with the humblest citizen and to call him by his name. He lacks a necessary dimension of Godhead, some of the Olympian remoteness and mystery of the Aristotelian Deity who did not condescend to notice the world and its affairs, but who drew the world after him not by what he did but by what he was. Of him one can say with Spinoza, "Whoso loves God must not expect God to love him in return."

Yet as I contemplate the fate of the Olympians and the recurrence in the history of religion of the mystical assurance of a personal salvation to be realised by each individual, I find it only reasonable to suppose that such assurance answers to no mere transient religious need such as enlightenment may displace but to some

permanent hunger in human nature. Guided by this reflection I can see at least two shafts of light that illuminate the problem of the immediate knowledge of God.

(1) A God who is the God of the whole universe and not also of its details is not sufficient for religion. I am not now thinking of the familiar pragmatic criticism that such a God is an idle or ineffectual being because, as author of everything, He is author of nothing in particular, but of a specific kind of working which religion must attribute to God. I emphasise the word religion here, for a Being who determines the destiny of all men, saving a universal Humanity on a large scale, who presides over the laws of nature and whose hand is to be seen only in the control of the divine far-off event, and in operations of a like cosmic sweep, is a God that will satisfy only the philosopher and the scientist. His freezing impersonality is fittingly recognised in such names as Divine Principle, Moral Order of the Universe, etc. Indeed, under inspection, He begins to look less like a monarch and more like a magnified version of that sinister figure of our time—the executive official who is too busy with "the large lines of policy" (whatever that may mean) to have time for the details. Such a Being may satisfy the demand for an explanation, but what religion announces is not "I have explained the world," but "I have overcome the world." And the world is not overcome, nor the problem of evil met, by the conception of any far-off event or any good of the whole universe such as may be supposed to constitute the purpose of

this Being. How shall it heal my hurt now to know that 'in the long run' or 'on the whole' my evil is God's good or the good of the whole universe? God has been defined as the Absolute Stranger between whose purpose and mine there is no discoverable point of identity; there remains therefore not only no motive why I should acquiesce in my suffering or sacrifice my private advantage for the sake of this God and His plans, but no ultimate means whereby I may see through this suffering. If, then, the specific religious need is to be satisfied the transcendent God is not sufficient; there must be a possibility of communion between the soul and God whereby the individual can see that God's purpose is also his—in short, that God is interested in *him*. The mystic immediacy, then, can be taken as a necessary criticism of the claims of the God who is wholly transcendent. It is the opaqueness between man and God that the mystic seeks to overcome.[1]

(2) Another line of approach lies through a consideration of the kind of proof of which God's existence is susceptible.

The validity or invalidity of any proposed proof depends on our conception of the nature of the being whose existence is to be proved. Thus for one who thinks of God primarily as Creator or as Designer the first cause argument or the design argument will seem sufficient; while if these are rejected it will be because, whatever they prove, they do not prove God. Now God is not a physical object whose existence is uncertain,

[1] For further treatment of this problem see chapter xii.

therefore His existence cannot be verified by the sensory confirmation of observers, as, for example, the existence of land at the South Pole might be verified. Again, God is not a person among persons, a member of a society, a finite being who may or may not exist. Therefore it would be inappropriate to try to verify His existence as we should try to verify that (say) of Mrs. Harris, or to apply the tests that we might apply to some "psychical" phenomenon which was asserted to be the soul of someone known to us. God, it would seem, is not a being whom we begin to know at a definite moment of time. His status, from the point of view of knowledge, is not precarious, as that of other objects is, in the sense that at one time they may be unknown and at another known. We may put this in various ways. We may say that the idea of God is not just one more idea added to the stock of ideas in the mind at any one time; or that the existence of God is the fixed point in all discussions and the only question is that of the nature of God; or, following Hume's line of argument in the Dialogues on Natural Religion, we may point out how the traditional proofs presuppose the idea of that which they are seeking to establish.

If then God is cognitively inescapable, if in some sense we know Him all the time, the proof of God must consist in a kind of reminding ourselves of God or of realising what was implied, what "we meant all along," in our efforts as rational and moral beings.

But now we have to observe that not logic but experience only can initiate such a judgment. He who thus retrospectively interprets his restlessness, whether

he be lover or weaver of syllogisms or author of Hegelian dialectics, is in the immediate presence of that which he sought. One must simply see or possess a truth before one can say: This is the idea that possessed me though I did not know it. Thus we can say that every higher synthesis, together with the judgment of the thesis and antithesis as abstractions, presupposes a prior experience; while the dialectic, taken as a whole, presupposes a major intuition which is the inconspicuous, because constant, source of the entire movement and of all minor intuitions. That truth which I seem to have deduced by the power of logic must first in all literalness have been "borne in upon" me before I can deduce it.

In sum then we may express the matter thus: The existence of God can never be inferred from any other premises because the existence of God is that which makes all inference possible. Any theory therefore which implies that God is to be known chiefly or wholly as an inference is incomplete.[2] From this point of view the mystical insistence upon the immediate relationship to God may be read as a statement that what appears in philosophy as an inference must first be matter of experience. The existence of God must be "borne in upon" the individual.

I claim no more for these reflections than that they may shed some light upon the problem. Even if that

[2] I am thinking of such a system as that of Royce wherein God is inferred from the human experience of error or of finitude in various forms. The definition of God which emerges is—God is that which is necessary to complete the meaning of this experience. There is great virtue, and great difficulty, in the "that which."

claim is justified the major part of the problem is left in darkness, for it still remains to find a way of thinking about God which shall harmonise the two elements in the conception which we noted at the outset—God as the God of the whole universe, transcendent, remote, hovering close to the impersonal, inspirer of a proper awe and humility, with the God who is interested in and directly addresses Himself to the individual. Yet even if mysticism contains only half the truth it is sufficient for our present purpose to have brought that half into relief.

CHAPTER VII

INTUITION

THE mystics, we have said, claim to have known the universe in its wholeness. They have perceived how "all things belong together." Synoptic, intuitive, are the terms that naturally occur to us in seeking to describe this insight. This claim seems to be at once too vague and too ambitious; and it is rendered worse by the fact that their knowledge is inarticulate. That which they know rejects all positive predicates. And what are we to make of a knowledge without predicates, a knowledge, so to speak, of pure subject? How can the mind begin with the pure subject, with the undifferentiated whole? Does not the mind, in knowing, advance gradually, step by step, comparing, subsuming, synthetising? Is not 'the whole' a mere limiting concept, an abstraction which represents not an object known or waiting to be known, but merely the ideal which regulates our procedure in cognitive enterprises?

If we are to be in a position to judge the mystic we need to remind ourselves that in knowing any object we not only begin with the whole but we work continually with that idea throughout the process of deepening acquaintance. To adopt the convenient terminology of Mr. Henry Sturt, understanding is not only 'part-working' but 'total-working' as well.[1] I say re-

[1] Principles of Understanding, p. 41.

mind ourselves of this doctrine, because it is in no sense novel. It has certainly never been absent from philosophy since the days of Plato; but it has a way of dropping out of sight.

In order that we may see what is meant by this total-working, let me give four illustrations of it, from perception, from memory, from creative activity, and from conscience. For examples of the first two I cannot do better than quote from Mr. Sturt, whose treatment of the subject is comprehensive and acute.

> Take a simple example of perception, 'There's a dog.' I do not mean, of course, the verbal assertion, but the perception of the dog as it flashes into the mind of the observer. Such a mental act has all the qualities of noesis: it is synoptic, schematic and coactive.
>
> The perception is synoptic because we do not apprehend the dog piece by piece, but all at once. Even if the dog is partly hidden, or dimly seen in the dusk, we apprehend it as a whole; not as a dog perhaps, because the data may not suffice for that; but as a smallish animal, or at least as an object lying within certain limits of size.
>
> It is schematic, because all our sensuous experience of the dog, all the lines and shades and colours which strike our eye, are arranged according to a certain schema—the dog-schema as each of us has preformed it. Suppose the object is dimly seen so that we recognise it as an animal but not yet as a dog. Then some unmistakeable feature becomes apparent, the tail for example. At once the dog-schema is awakened in the mind and the visual appearance is apprehended in relation to it. It is in virtue of the schema that, while the sensuous material presented to the dog-observer

may be infinitely various, yet 'dog' is uniformly perceived. [pp. 82-83.]

Consider next the case of searching for a temporarily forgotten name.

The usual explanation of the process of recovering the name is that the agent thinks of all the things which lie contiguous to it, so that their associations with it may drag it to the surface of consciousness. Thus does William James explain the matter; but he adds a fact which is specially significant from my point of view. The place of the thing sought for, he says, is a gap; but it is an "aching gap." Here, as always, James' insight was better than his theory. Why does the gap ache? The part-working theory cannot tell us, but the total-working theory can. The meaning of 'aching' I take to be that we are not entirely ignorant of the name, but know its pattern vaguely; as that it begins with B, has three syllables, and so on. We can say with certainty that it is not this or that, though we cannot say what it is. There is more than one way of trying to recall a name. We may treat the name as an element in a larger pattern; that is, rehearse various scenes in which the man played a part and so recover the name; or we may treat the name itself as a pattern and try to complete its vague outline. In either case we have something vague before the mind which obstinately refuses to define itself satisfactorily; and this tantalising experience, I think, is what James meant by his "aching gap." [pp. 71-72.]

The clearest and most indisputable examples of this total-working are to be found in the creative operations of the mind. Whether the thing created is a simple spoken sentence or a poem the principle is the same. Before one speaks one knows in a general way what

one wants to say, but one does not know it as a definite series of words. Speech is not a rehearsal. This total meaning determines within limits both the starting point and the order of the words. Further, as we speak we discover more clearly just what it was we wanted to say. This, I take it, is also true of the writing of a poem. The author begins with an idea of, or rather for, the poem as a whole: he has an inspiration or an intuition. But the idea is not explicit to begin with. "Tell me your idea," we say to him. "Wait, wait! Give me a chance!" is the reply. A chance for what? To write the poem—that is, to articulate the idea. The process of writing the poem is nothing more or less than the articulating of the original idea. "In this cognitive process it is impossible to distinguish intuition from expression."[2]

To show what I mean by conscience I will give an example of what may be called the professional conscience. When we say that a doctor has a professional conscience we mean that he has a power of recognising intuitively those things which it would not become him, as a doctor, to do. Of course there exists a body of rules prescribing what may and may not be done professionally, rules which are themselves, perhaps, a deposit of conscience; but in addition to these, which have crystallised out, so to speak, there are other rules existing in solution, new points of scruple to be defined, new lines to be drawn. It is with this undefined margin and not with the body of formulated rules that the

[2] Croce, Aesthetic, ch. i. *Cf.* A. C. Bradley, Poetry for Poetry's Sake.

professional conscience is concerned. If you were to ask a doctor to write out all the professional rules which he found inscribed upon his conscience he could not do so, for the good reason that they are not inscribed there. On the other hand, you can be sure that when a relatively novel problem of conduct arose in his practice his conscience would come to his aid in helping him to choose among the various solutions which might occur to him. His conscience, then, since it is thus obviously selective, represents a kind of innate positive knowledge. This knowledge is not articulated in the form of definite principles of conduct: it exists in a more or less vague apprehension of what the ideal doctor is like, an ideal which becomes more precise in outline and in detail as it defines itself through contact with the data of experience. The conception of the ideal doctor is thus built up by a process in which we start, not with the separate parts of that ideal, but with the whole, and go on to clarify and elaborate that original datum.

Before going on it may be well to sum up the characteristics of total-working as it appears in these examples.

(1) In it the mind apprehends the whole. It is synoptic. It is intuitive, not analytic; noetic, not discursive. It is not a process of attaching predicates to a subject but it is a knowledge of the subject of predicates. (2) The knowledge it confers is inarticulate in the sense that it cannot readily be translated into conceptual terms. (3) Yet this knowledge is destined to become articulate, for although total-working and

part-working are distinguishable they are not incompatible. Each needs the other to correct and complete it. (4) Even when inarticulate it is positive, for it is the fruitful source of negations and exclusions. The poet, the doctor, the searcher for a forgotten word in our examples has each a strong enough grasp upon his meaning to be able to say what he does *not* want. This is one of the reasons why it is natural to deny the very existence of whole-knowledge: it looks like mere negation and emptiness. Yet negation may be other than 'mere'—it may be a symptom of a hold upon that with which one denies. But it is easy to confuse the two, just as it is easy to confuse that love of country which may lead one to hate the enemy with the belligerent patriotism which is nothing but a hatred of the enemy.

The theory we are adopting then is this: Knowing an object is a process in which two factors or movements of the mind are concerned—total-working and part-working. These movements are mutually supplementary and knowledge is the fruit of a harmonious alliance between them. We are required to think of the mind not as something immoveable, like a mirror, and of knowledge as a sort of simple staring, but of the mind as moving and growing and of knowledge as an assimilation brought about by this alternating movement. Total-working affects part-working not only in the beginning by predetermining the limits within which part-working is to operate, but continuously by leading to the discovery (mainly, as we have seen, by the method of exclusion of predicates) of new parts and by promoting a rearrangement of the system of

articulate knowledge at any moment achieved. Part-working, in turn, affects total-working. The whole is defined as the whole of these parts. That is the element in its meaning not subject to revision. But just because of this identity of meaning the character of the whole becomes more definite in so far as we succeed in relating the parts and interpreting them by each other.

In describing this harmonious interplay of functions we are obviously describing an ideal situation. In actual experience the balance is not maintained. We become fascinated by part-working, the whole eludes us, and this disturbs the health of the mind and proves our undoing. It is not without justice that the plain man regards philosophy as an almost wilful obscuring of God's truth. And the 'once-born' can say, "Here is the world, sound as a nut, perfect, not the smallest piece of chaos left, never a stitch nor an end; not a mark of haste, or botching, or second thought; but the theory of the world is a thing of shreds and patches."[3] We know that the multiplication of knowledge is not favourable to that power of simple regard which we call wisdom, that the scholar who is stuffed with information and equipped with every technical weapon too often loses all capacity save that of making a fresh distinction, that a man may carry such a burden of theology upon his back that he cannot lift up his eyes to heaven.

The other side of this is the familiar judgment, mystical in quality, that the attempt to translate any sig-

[3] Emerson, Plato.

nificant experience into ideas and language always falsifies and impoverishes it. This judgment is neither just nor wise, implying, as it does, that true knowledge ends in silence. Any achievement in expression is always so much sheer gain. It would be fairer to say that expression omits elements of the original, thus leaving open the possibility that the omission in time may be made good.

Yet it remains true that too much absorption in the business of establishing relations between the parts generates a poison which brings the work of understanding to a stop. The corrective lies in a deliberate effort to recover the whole, to give total-working its due.

Let us suppose that this effort has been successful and has led to the desired intuition: how are we to describe that intuition? There are two kinds of intuitive experience with which it is not to be confused. (1) Perception. A chess-player, about to make his move, perceives the state of the game. "Before making this move I had to plough through a mass of combinations which totalled at least one hundred moves. The text combination is one of them, and I had to see through the whole thing to the end before I decided on this move."[4] This is a synoptic vision of a complex system of terms and relations: the situation is seen as an integrated whole of parts. The player's move is a response to that situation; it is an application of his idea. Further, the sensory element is present here. (2) In

[4] Capablanca, My Chess Career, p. 138.

the second type the sensory element is absent. An example is when one grasps a mathematical demonstration as a whole. Here again there is a complete synthesis: one sees the mutual implication of whole and parts. It is what may be called a post-analytical intuition, since it takes up into itself the results of analysis. The intuition I have in mind, the essentially mystical intuition, differs from both the preceding. It is the experience in which the solving idea 'dawns on' one, in which one discerns the clue, in which one recovers the forgotten subject of one's predicates. One has not yet begun to apply the idea, still less has one completed the application as in the case of the synoptic or the integrative intuition. The clue has a relative independence; it is now, temporarily, a datum among data—the word become flesh; but it does not have complete independence (for then it would be meaningless); it is known and identifiable as the clue to these data, the subject of these predicates.

As for the psychological marks of this experience—it seems wholly natural to express the discovery *excitedly,* as something teeming with importance and consequences, for the time being more or less inexpressible, for knowledge. For what one has seen is that all one's data will have to be overhauled and reinterpreted and placed in accordance with the new idea: not one of them will remain unaffected. This intuitive knowledge is prophetic in the sense that though one possesses the idea yet that knowledge has to be built in with the rest of one's knowledge; it has to be *established.* But it can only be established by making con-

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nections with the existing system of ideas. The ancient paradox here makes its appearance in an unlikely place, for this is a kind of knowledge which can only be saved by being lost: one must be willing to surrender it in order to retain it.

This third type of intuition, we maintain, is the mystical type. If we are right, then we are in a position to see how all growth in understanding involves the use of a mystical factor. And it follows that the mystics are perfectly justified in claiming that their experience is noetic, but that they are mistaken in postulating some special organ of religious knowledge. As far as its form goes, intuition is a familiar, if too little noticed, faculty. Furthermore, we can now interpret that baffling combination of apparent speechlessness and explosive denials with a copious outpouring of explanation, analysis, and dogma. This in turn enables us to confront the mystics' frequent (and mistaken) opposition between discursive knowledge and intuition with the obvious implications of their practice. For mysticism as we now regard it is not the enemy but the inevitable ally of philosophy.

I will try to explain more fully the meaning of this interpretation by considering its bearing upon two issues which mysticism constantly provokes.

CHAPTER VIII

INTUITION AND PHILOSOPHY

IT is sometimes said that there is something manifestly incredible, because intolerably arrogant, in the mystics' claim to have an intuitive knowledge of the total world-object. But I doubt whether the objection can be sustained either by logic or by experience. Not by logic, for in principle there is no more arrogance in the claim to possess an intuitive knowledge of the universe than there is in the claim to know in advance the whole of the simplest object of perception. An exhaustive knowledge about the pen with which I now write is a task which would require the labours of physicist and chemist (to mention only these) until the end of time. Yet if I should be able to inherit the fruits of their labours my knowledge would still be knowledge of this pen as I now simply perceive it in its wholeness. The point I am making has been put with great force and clearness by Professor Sheldon. "The completed infinite," he writes, "is not contradictory at all, if once we grant that sameness and difference do not belie each other. The sameness runs undiminished through all the infinite list of qualities, whatever their differences. The apple is red; it is bright red and pleasing; it is bright red and pleasing and some other quality; and so on. What then do we mean by saying that it is complete while all its qualities are

so many they can never be complete? Simply that every added quality, is of the same old apple; *is* it, in truth, while yet the number of novelties overlaying the sameness is endless. The completeness signifies the fact that the sameness remains undestroyed; the incompleteness, that ever new and positive differences may be added. The series is complete at every stage, for every novelty is a predicate of—identified with—the original datum, the red apple. It is incomplete at every stage in the sense that no amount of identity precludes an additional difference which we proceed to discover. But for that very reason the incompleteness does not give the lie to completeness. It seems to do so only because it suggests to our minds that always some qualities of the apple, being different from all yet enumerated, are left out—as if they could not be there. But when we remember that they are sure to be identified with, as predicates of, the datum we started with, we can see that they are not left out. That datum already includes them. Their incompleteness, in short, does not mean that they are not all there, but that being there they generate, as it were, ever new aspects of the said object. And these new aspects, again, however many and divergent, are always to be identified with the original datum. There is then a question-begging character in the word *incompleteness;* it is unconsciously assumed to connote that some terms of the series are never reached. But they are all reached; only when reached they at once reveal a novel element, a diversity which enlarges the already completed

thing."[1] From this point of view, then, the mystic who anticipates the goal of all philosophy does no more than assert that philosophy's task of interpretation, infinite though it be, is now and for ever one identical task, defined by a permanent hold upon that which is to be interpreted.

Nor can I see any force in the alleged empirical objection that 'the universe,' 'the whole scheme of things,' is but a vague name for lack of knowledge or of interest, that no one is concerned with the universe. On the contrary, every man consciously or unconsciously is concerned with it, and his concern is manifested in whatever discernible personality or temperament he may have. What is the ultimate determinant of the confident bearing or the timid, of heroism or acquiescence, of 'matter-of-factness,' melancholy or placidity, but the individual's native sense of the kind of world-situation that he confronts, a sense by which he reads his own experience as so much revelation of That with which ultimately he has to deal? Every man is certainly capable of some total reaction, as James called it, though it may well take some crisis of tragedy, bereavement or peril to elicit it and arouse him from the comfortable securities of conventional living that encourage the taking of all things for granted. And the same thing appears when we turn from individual experience to the collective experience of men as it is organised in the different departments of knowledge. If for the moment we may say that re-

[1] W. H. Sheldon, Strife of Systems and Productive Duality, pp. 462-463.

ligion expresses man's total reaction it is a mere commonplace to remark that religion cannot and does not remain unaffected by progress in science or morals or politics. If certain conceptions of God, such as despot or warrior or miracle-worker, have now become impossible to the mind of our time, that is testimony to the fact that the idea of God is continually involved in these enterprises and reflects our progress. The fact that our total world-object is continually present to our minds may be what makes it inconspicuous; it can hardly be a reason for denying that it is at work.

I pass to the other issue with which our interpretation has to reckon. The mystics are certain that they have seen God and that thereafter they can discern his presence, his 'vestigia,' in all things. Yet they have been certain of much that is false and of much that is doubtful. This would seem to dispose of their claims to be trustworthy. Their revelation cannot be authoritative. Yet a little reflection shows that this judgment is superficial. If it seems at all plausible it is because our thought is shaped by two assumptions: first, that certainty is what is reached only at the end of a process of reasoning; second, that certainty is not compatible with error.

The first of these has received a kind of philosophical sanctification in a familiar theory of truth. Truth, we are told, is coherence. There are no axioms, no self-evident truths, such as Aristotle and Descartes believed in, from which all other truths may be suspended, chain-wise. Truth is a self-supporting system in which all particular truths get their character from

their interconnection with the other components of the system. The image invoked is not now the chain but the arch or the solar system. This theory is the academic apotheosis of the familiar notion that all certainty is demonstrative certainty, for, according to this doctrine, all certainties are provisional (and therefore not genuine certainties at all). There is only one certainty or self-evident truth and that is inaccessible.

The theory is built on the same principle as the doctrine of unmodified altruism and as the practical maxim never to act until the evidence is all in. It is exposed to the same kind of objection as these. If the good of A consists in working for the good of B and the good of B in working for the good of C, the good is never defined in concrete terms. Again, to tell me not to act in advance of complete evidence is to condemn me to passivity. Similarly, if every particular certainty shines by a reflected light no one of them has a proper light of its own.[2] We can find no source of illumination: the self-supporting system of truths turns out to be a system of nothings. In other words, all certainty cannot be derivative; a system of truth cannot be generated out of a set of tentative assertions or mental reservations. It must be possible to be certain in advance of criticism and reflection. In the beginning was the datum. The task of criticism and reflection is to examine and try to harmonise the data.

Now of course it did not need this disquisition to establish the fact that men are prematurely certain and often certain of things that are not so, but the real

[2] *Cf.* Spencer, Data of Ethics, § 86.

question is how far they are justified in this premature certainty. Should we not, as truth seekers, resist this natural tendency? The answer has already been suggested. We should never get any truth at all if we tried to eliminate all possibility of error at the outset; such complete rational detachment is to be secured only by ceasing to live. The attitude of waiting for corroboration, while it has its function, can never be the only valid attitude. Our danger lies not in committing ourselves to certainty with the inevitable risk of error, but in refusing to bring our several certainties together so that they may suffer mutual correction or enjoy mutual reinforcement.

This is the point at which the second assumption may enter and cause difficulty: error seems to cancel certainty. If the deliverance of one moment is contradicted by later experience it looks as though the content of the first moment had been wholly discredited. Yet if I say, for example, 'I hear the train coming' and later say, 'It was not the train,' the second judgment does not obliterate the first; whatever the noise may prove to have been there will be some element in the later interpretation which was contributed by the original experience described (erroneously) as hearing the train coming; the whole meaning of the original cannot be retrospectively imported into it by some Hegelian thaumaturgy. Later insight may refine upon, it cannot wholly abolish, the original certainty, nor can it wholly create the final certainty.

Thus the mistakes and the exaggerations of mystic utterances, together with the conflicts between them,

need not wholly impair their truth. The mystic seeks the one God, the Substance of things, and says that he has found Him. He has a right to his certainty.

The fact that he has found other things besides, that he has claimed to know too much, does not rule him out as an untrustworthy witness. When the work of criticism has been completed whatever permanent knowledge about God emerges will be all of a piece with mystical revelation. That is why those who are not mystics must take mysticism seriously. The philosopher who refuses to consider what mysticism has to say about the universe is like a man who should avoid all food that was not food and nothing but food.

Mysticism is a perpetual return to the vision of God, to the original datum, a return therefore to the old; but to the old not as an exhausted but as an inexhaustible datum from which may be drawn out new suggestions, new dogmas—not in the form of pure metal but in the form of ore.

And in the final appraisal I am willing to stand by this figure. It would be foolish for either the refiner or the miner to take exclusive credit for the final product. The work of neither is complete without that of the other. If by claiming universal authority for the mystical revelation we mean that mysticism can dispense with philosophy, then the claim is insupportable. There are mystics who have set up a radical opposition between the religious intuition and the discursive reason (although even here, as we have seen, their practice has conflicted with their theory), contending that the former was a sufficient means to religious truth.

They are wrong. On the other hand, there are philosophers who have been just as exorbitant in their estimate of the power of the dialectic, and they also are wrong. Wisdom lies not in choosing either mysticism or philosophy but in choosing both. Philosophy is the articulation and completion of mysticism, but mysticism, in turn, is needed in order to complete by correction and supplementation the work of philosophy. And this is a perpetual process. For if it is the destiny of mysticism to lose its life in philosophy, it is the destiny of philosophy to recover its hold upon its object by renewal of the mystic vision. Of each we can say, He was himself the slayer and shall himself be slain. The life-in-death and death-in-life of these two movements constitute the metabolism of the mind.

One thing remains to be added. In the beginning was the ore. Mysticism seems to me to have priority in this relationship. It is not only the completion of philosophy; it is its presupposition. Reason may establish our certainties: it does not initiate them. The task of philosophy might be defined as the problem of showing how reality and appearance belong together. Philosophy therefore begins with a distinction which it did not create, with a problem: "Things are not what they seem. How can this be?" It is religion, with its vague and awful contrast between the sacred and the secular, between the familiar and the unfamiliar, that generated and still keeps alive the problem. Yet religion could hardly have condemned the appearances without a hold upon that positive reality which exposed their incompleteness. It is this mystical knowl-

edge that sets going the rumble of the distant drum, and philosophy is part of man's attempt to quell the restlessness that ensues. This is the sense in which mysticism lies at the beginning of philosophy as it lies also at its end.

PART III
RELIGION AND MORALITY

CHAPTER IX

THE PROBLEM

THE great problem of philosophy, we are sometimes told, is to reconcile religion and morality, or, more precisely, to establish harmony between the certainties of religious experience and the postulates of the moral life. We accept this statement as providing us with a vantage ground from which to bring into relief the relations between mysticism and conduct. We need only remember that morality and religion here bear somewhat special meanings which give emphasis to the opposition between them.

Let us begin with a statement of the antithesis in its most striking form. "The main difference is that what in morality only is to be, in religion somewhere and somehow really is and what we are to do is done. Whether it is thought of as what is done now, or what will be done hereafter, makes in this respect no practical difference. They are different ways of looking at the same thing; and, whether present or future, the reality is equally certain. The importance for practice of this religious point of view is that what is to be done is approached, not with the knowledge of a doubtful success, but with the perfect certainty of already accomplished victory."[1]

[1] F. H. Bradley, Ethical Studies, pp. 297-298. For a similar position see A. E. Taylor, Elements of Metaphysics, pp. 391-392, and Bosanquet, Value and Destiny of the Individual, pp. 238-239, 242-246. For a comment upon the implications of such an expression as "already accomplished victory" see Bosanquet, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

The difficulties in the way of any theoretical reconciliation between the claims of religion and morality as thus formulated are too obvious to need the helpful indicative finger. It will be more to the purpose to make a rapid survey of some representative solutions.

(1) In the interests of morality one may deny that religion commits us to any such assertion. "It does not matter," the objector may be supposed to continue, "whether we say that the victory of our highest ideals is already accomplished, or already assured, or embodied in eternity or in the Absolute—the practical consequences are the same in each case. The moral struggle becomes at worst illusory and at best histrionic. Duty is seen to be merely misplaced finite emphasis, and the feeling that the issues of human conduct are critical for the fate of the universe as well as for our own characters contains no true report. We may feel as though the universe were the theatre of a doubtful struggle between the forces of good and evil in which we are called upon to take part, but this, we shall be told, is to construe the universe from the point of view of 'mere morality' and in religion we transcend that point of view. But the price of this transcending is that our moral values become discredited and our choices morally indifferent. Our freedom, and with it our self-respect, vanishes. The strenuous mood in us collapses and we grow enervated in a climate of cosmic security. The remedy is to restore the practical will to its primacy and, taking our stand upon its deliverances, to declare for a finite God who needs our help

in the struggle against evil, for a growing universe and for open futures."

But this last doctrine, as usually presented, goes to the opposite extreme from the theory which it rejects. Dissatisfied with the thought of ultimate security, its exponents give us a philosophy of ultimate risk. Morality, to say nothing of religion, cannot be content with that. An experiment which is not subject to fixed conditions is no experiment, a conflict in which there are no rules is no conflict. There must somewhere be a point of certainty. A growing universe may provide for open futures, but whoso declares that the universe is growing states an unalterable fact about its structure, which fact is the eternal guarantee of the possibility and validity of experiment.

(2) Another solution starts from the admitted fact that your genuine religious optimist, who is confident of the ultimate victory of the good and perhaps even of his own salvation, does not exploit these certainties on his own behalf by regarding them as a justification for a policy of *laissez faire*. On the contrary, his optimism seems to increase his moral energy. Shall we not therefore say that there is something paradoxical and inconsistent about the religious consciousness? "I do not think," writes Professor Taylor, "we need shrink from the conclusion that practical religion involves a certain element of intellectual contradiction. Thus, though God is not truly God until we deny the existence of any independent 'evil' by which His nature is limited, it seems probable that the thought of ourselves as 'fellow-workers with God' would hardly lead to practical

good works unless we also inconsistently allowed ourselves to imagine God as struggling against a hostile power and standing in need of our assistance. But this only shows that the practical value of religion in guiding action is not necessarily dependent upon its scientific truth."[2] To the same effect is the statement of Bosanquet. "The conclusion is, in a word, that the God of religion, inherent in the completest experience, is an appearance of reality, as distinct from being the whole and ultimate reality; a rank which religion cannot consistently claim for the Supreme Being as it must conceive him."[3]

A theory of this kind has two possible meanings. Either it involves a frank recognition of the contradiction in practical religion—in which event the problem is restated, not solved; or it amounts to saying that the nearer our religion comes to being philosophically true the less effect it should have upon conduct. As philosophers, we try to see things *sub specie eternitatis,* but from this point of view moral effort becomes make-believe and God is reduced to an inadequate symbol of the Absolute.

The theory in this form can only be met by a criticism of the concept of the Absolute upon which it rests, but as an indirect and general comment one may remark that no reasonable man would remain in this position if he could see any honourable way out of it. Such an antagonism between philosophy and religion or philosophy and morality is in the long run in-

[2] A. E. Taylor, Elements of Metaphysics, p. 399.
[3] Value and Destiny of the Individual, pp. 255-256.

tolerable. It is an affront to all good sense to require that in setting about the pursuit of our ideals we shall not only forget but discard our philosophical insight; while philosophy can hardly gain from inflicting upon us the malady of a double personality from whose torments we can escape only by hypnotising ourselves into a speculative trance or into a religious somnambulism.

(3) A third type of solution has been concisely expressed by Professor Royce. "The only way whereby God can be in his heaven, or all right with the world, is the way that essentially includes the doing of strenuous deeds by righteous men."[4]

If we are to take this statement literally then it follows that God's triumph is now conditional upon my effort. At a given moment, whether He is to remain in His heaven or not depends upon my choice. But a conditional triumph is an expression applicable not to the Absolute but to a finite God, and we are confronted with the difficulties in that idea. If we are not to take it literally, but in the sense of some eternal triumph, then the persistent question of the pragmatist recurs: How does this philosophy help me to choose my course when I am confronted with a particular issue at a given moment? Whatever I do, the Absolute—how am I to

[4] The Sources of Religious Insight, p. 177. For a similar expression *cf.* the following from A. E. Taylor. "In that perfect whole our moral ideals and moral effort, as finite beings belonging to the temporal order, are of course included with everything else, and its perfection is therefore no ground for treating them as nugatory. Our own moral struggle with the apparent evil of the time series is itself an integral part of the reality which, in its complete individual character, is already perfect, if we could but win to a point of view from which to behold it as it is." *Op. cit.*, p. 398.

put it?—will include, already includes, will have included?—my deed. If I choose wrong, I know that my failure will somehow, *sub specie eternitatis,* redound to the glory of the Absolute; if I do right, my contribution is only that of the fly to the moving wheel. All that such a theory can do is to offer me retrospective consolation in the event of a mistaken decision; it does not help me when facing an issue either to believe that my choice is critical or to find out how I should choose. Philosophical truth is once again proved useless for practice.

(4) One more position with regard to our problem is worth mentioning. Those who adopt it can hardly be said to offer a solution, for what they propose is, in effect, if not in intention, to substitute morality for religion. In its popular form we are familiar with it under the name of the religion of social service. This religion directs our gaze earthward rather than heavenward; instead of being occupied with the supernatural, the divine, and the transcendent, it is occupied with the finite, the human, and the concrete. It has its own way, now sufficiently well known, of providing for humility, for hope, for the consciousness of union with a larger reality and even for (vicarious) immortality. It seeks its inspiration not in God but in the Sense of Duty, and its tendency is everywhere to treat *laborare* as an equivalent for *orare.*

In so far as this popular creed has ever received any consistent philosophical elaboration it may be said to have found it in Positivism. The Worship of Humanity is, of course, a much more comprehensive idea

than that underlying the religion of social service, but in both the emphasis upon moral effort, upon duty and upon practical performance is the same. It is this emphasis which alone concerns us. One illustration in support of this contention will suffice.

> In matters of the heart the expression is the act. We love most when we show love. If Worship be the visible and conscious outpouring of our affection, attachment, self-sacrifice, it is about us ever (thanks be to Humanity) in our homes and in our souls, alone, or in our families, as in great gatherings of men and women. All honest rejoicings at a marriage and a birth, all real mourning at a funeral, the visible emotions in the sacred quiet of the household, are acts of Worship, if only they are real, unselfish, spontaneous. Two friends who rest true to each other, every man who in silence and purity of heart resolves that somebody or something shall be the better for him ere he die, every honest man who throws his heart into his work—all of these are fulfilling an irresistible act of Worship.[5]

This passage reveals clearly the tendency to identify work with worship, morality with religion. Whatever recognition it may contain of a legitimate movement of the mind away from practical tasks involves nothing more than a conscious steeling of our resolution, a confirming of ourself in devotion to Duty. We seem to be dealing with what passes for the practical application of a doctrine of Divine immanence: Humanity must be worshipped by the actual services of man to man.

[5] Frederic Harrison, The Creed of a Layman, pp. 227-228. I have transposed two passages and made some trifling omissions.

But this practical inference, although plausible, is mistaken. The positivist himself is forced to admit a difference between Humanity as a proper object of devotion and source of inspiration and the human beings to whom he stands bound by ties of duty. "How wanting in breadth and continuity even is the ideal Republic, even our own contemporary human race!"[6] And the amount of that difference measures the discrepancy between religion and morality. A recent writer has expressed this criticism with terseness and vigour.

> It is only so far as he presses the organic point of view, so as to unite the Future with the Present and the Past in one mystical body, that ideal humanity assumes for the Comtist the features and proportions of deity. But humanity in the idea, humanity with the light of the ideal upon its upward path and the same light projected upon the infinite possibilities of the future—is not a fact of the historical order. It is an idea every whit as mystical as that of God. For just in so far as we do not identify humanity with its own past and present, but endow it with the potency of a nobler and ampler future, just so far do we take man and his history as the expression of a principle of perfection, whose presence at every stage constitutes the possibility of advance beyond that stage.[7]

This brings out sharply the familiar paradox. From the point of view of 'mere morality' Humanity is a synthesis that is yet to be achieved, an event that is still far-off. The event becomes divine, morality be-

[6] Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 226.
[7] A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, The Idea of God, p. 157.

comes touched by some religious enthusiasm, only when the event is regarded as in some sense consummated. The good is at once made and in the making. But herewith positivism confesses that morality is not a sufficient substitute for religion.[8]

The problem, then, as it emerges from this survey of representative 'solutions' may be stated thus: How are we to interpret reality so as to satisfy a twofold human demand? As finite beings we want security and we want risk, we want novelty and we want continuity, we want the self-respect that comes from knowing that our deeds may be significant contributions to some eternal substance of good, and we need also the assurance that there is some eternal substance of good to contribute to. Thus we can see that, somehow, religious serenity and moral strenuousness belong together, but the nature of this bond it is not easy to understand.

If the interpretation of mysticism thus far proposed is sound then mysticism should have some light to throw upon the problem. For we may express the underlying contention of mysticism in purely formal fashion thus: The One is doubtless immanent in the Many. It does not follow that the best way of dealing with the Many is by attending to them directly. In fact the contrary is true: in order successfully to deal with them I must from time to time withdraw attention from them and focus it upon the One. The total object, many-in-one, is to be grasped through alternate acts of attention. To use the language of Professor Hocking, whose theory we here adopt, "All good things do

[8] See note at the end of this chapter.

doubtless belong together; but each good thing, we recognise, is to be pursued separately. The difficulty lies in inferring from the parts to the whole: that is to say, in seeing that the alternation which is obviously necessary as between one partial object and another is also necessary as between all partial objects and *the whole*. But just this, I think, is what worship means: that the whole must become a separate object of pursuit, taking its turn as if it were also a part, as if it were *another* among the many goods of practical occupation."[9] Mysticism may explain the necessity for this alternation since it is in mysticism that we see the alternation 'writ large.'

We will turn first to a study of the insufficiency of the exclusively practical ambition and the consequent need for the movement towards mystical experience.

NOTE

The criticism in its general form is applicable elsewhere. Thus a consideration of primitive Buddhism would serve to bring out the same point. Buddhist morality is permeated with a sense of strain. There is not only the active effort required to carry out the practical precepts, but there is also the introspective effort of reminding oneself that individuality is an illusion. "Behind the thought there is no thinker, behind the speech there is no speaker, behind the deed there is no doer." The apparent inconsistency in Buddhism, as in Taoism, lies in combining an ideal of inactivity with the command to be unremitting in following out the path. One is urged to struggle arduously—for what? To overcome struggle and strenuosity. Now if, ignoring the motives that may have led to the choice of Nirvana as an ideal, one asks what it is that enables the Buddhist to hold on to it, that is, to *sustain* a type of effort admittedly disagreeable, the answer, I believe, lies in the more or less tacit assumption of the disciple that the ultimate forces of the universe, or rather the universal flux, are backing him up. The law of

[9] The Meaning of God in Human Experience, p. 405.

Karma is the reflection in human affairs of a moral order of the universe, and this is the principle of perfection whose continual presence guarantees the possibility of the ultimate attainment of Nirvana. The strength of the guarantee was reinforced, I suppose, by the conviction that Gautama Buddha had himself achieved Nirvana. The thing had been done.

CHAPTER X

MORALITY STRENUOUS ALL-TOO-STRENUOUS

I PROPOSE in this chapter to consider three kinds of strain which are normally incident to the moral life and to point out how these seem to indicate the need for a corrective of the religious type.

Moral health is concomitant with *absorption* in one's task. Happiness is its symptom, and happiness is a function of some moving equilibrium between our attention and the objects to which we attend. To be wrapped up in one's work, to feel continually equal to the occasion, to be actually and prophetically master of the situation—these are so many familiar descriptions of the state of mind to which we refer. But absorption may be a synonym for complacency and stagnation, for that kind of satisfaction in achievement which Nietzsche had in mind when he uttered that scornful beatitude, "Blessed are the sleepy, for they shall soon drop off." Evidently that absorption which is the condition of moral health presupposes free choice and an unimpaired power of self-criticism. In order to keep a sharp focus to practical attention we must frequently adjust it. A constant scrutiny of ourselves and of our level of attainment is thus required of us if we are to guard against stagnation of the will.

(1) Here begins the first type of strain. For, forced to be scrupulous, we go on to become over-scrupulous.

The inward eye discovers ever more imperfections until there is seen to be no health in us. The gulf widens between present achievement and the goal: perfection and health seem correspondingly further off. The good which we seek retreats to the confines of hope and imagination: it becomes a Holy Grail, a Heavenly City out of sight, a messianic 'reign,' a Utopia, the 'far off, most secret and inviolate Rose.' But just as a common catastrophe levels all—

> young boys and girls
> Are level now with men: the odds is gone,
> And there is nothing left remarkable
> Beneath the visiting moon—

even so, in the light of a divine event so remote, the contributions of all men become equally important and equally unimportant. Hopelessness descends upon the moral life. The ends we set before us have ceased to convince, the savour of worth has evaporated from them.

Remedies are proposed, various devices to conceal from ourselves the true situation. We are told, for example, that happiness lies, wholly or in part, within ourselves; that without some effort of attention on our part, some will-to-believe, nothing would have any value for us. The completely rational or impartial spectator could never find any basis for preference among the competing goods of life. Have not cynicism and satire flourished throughout the ages precisely through exploiting such an attitude of professed detachment from all human ambition and desire? Noth-

ing then can be valuable for me apart from some contributing will on my part to have it so.

A plausible doctrine, but one which a touch of experience is sufficient to expose. What I have been told is doubtless a fact of psychology, but, with my recognition of it, the fact is, so to speak, out of the bag. If any part of the value of an object is determined by my deliberate resolve to regard it as valuable, and if I know this, then I know at the same time that I am the victim of my own illusion. Henceforth I cannot forget that I am living in a world which is to some extent a world of make-believe. But to just that extent it is unsatisfactory. For I can perceive a more convincing type of value, a value which I not only freely adopt but which I am forced to adopt, something found, not made.[1]

Another method of meeting the situation at first sight promises better because it involves a grasping of the nettle. The endlessness of the pursuit of the moral ideals is a condition now not only admitted but gladly accepted. The joys and the zest of conflict, of adventure, of growth, are contrasted with the tame satisfactions of safety and the boredom of assured attainment. The ideal of a 'celestial lubberland' is renounced in favour of a gospel of work. There is no El Dorado. What does that matter? "For to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive and the true success is to

[1] The logic of the situation is not altered if we substitute instinct for voluntary attention and regard our values as in part determined by our instinctive preferences. If I treat the instinct as part of the self, the element contributed by the instinct to the value of the object is so far a diminution of the 'real' value of the object.

labour." The only finality is that there are no finalities, the only certainty is that no stage in evolution is the last stage. Man is a bridge. Even the superman, once we perceive that he is only the symbol of the strenuous ideal, turns out to be a bridge too. Our only assurance is that the gates of the future are always open. We are called to a struggle and there is an unlimited field for enterprise. What more could we ask of life?

There are many strands in human nature with which the doctrine thus indicated obviously accords—the instincts of curiosity and pugnacity, for example, and the natural hunger for risk. The experience of failure may generate this philosophy: "Well, I failed; but at any rate I had the fun of trying." So may the experience of success: "Well, here I am. So far so good. But of course I can't stay here. What next?"

But in spite of these considerations I doubt if this doctrine of the flying goal will commend itself to sober reflection. Like every attempt to make a virtue of necessity, it confesses itself a second best and thereby admits that there is a first best. It is too histrionic or too romantic, according as we choose to view it. We are asked to take life as pure adventure and the strain incident to that attitude will inevitably reveal itself in time. The reason for this is clear. To ask me to be satisfied with adventure rather than with achievement is to ask me to keep my eyes fixed not on objective results, but upon inner effects in the way of emotions, thrills, exultations. This is to put a premium upon sentimentalism. In the end I shall weary of this forced and unnatural attitude. The nettle will begin to sting, grasp I never

so firmly, and the theory of the flying goal will be revealed for what it is—another vain attempt to reconcile me to the hopelessness which by some strange fatality my very moral earnestness seems to generate.[2]

(2) Morality demands decisiveness, for, if we are to be moral we must act and the prerequisite of action is decision. This sounds a harmless truism, but it has important consequences. Since our knowledge of the facts in any situation requiring a moral choice can never be exhaustive, our decisions are always unjustified and frequently wrong. It has been said that the maxim of conservativism is that nothing should ever be done for the first time. The epigram is truer than most epigrams, for it is obviously wrong, by any ideal standard of righteousness, to pass judgment on a man or a movement or an institution or to decide on a policy until the evidence is all in. Yet, for a finite being, the evidence can never be all in. So we have to cut short the process of reflecting and weighing of alternatives, to make our choice and to plunge into action, consoling ourselves with the thought that we are making the best of a bad job and that there comes a point in every

[2] It is worth observing that this is often the point at which hedonism appears as the way out of the predicament. For pleasure is the bird in the hand: it is immediate, it is certain, and it is inherently convincing. The indefinitely postponed good stands little chance against it. Spinoza has expressed this well. "If," he writes, "we could possess an adequate knowledge of the duration of things, and could determine by reason their periods of existence, we should contemplate things future with the same emotion as things present; and the mind would desire as though it were present the good which it conceived as future; consequently it would necessarily neglect a lesser good in the present etc." Eth. IV, prop. lxii, schol.

situation where not to decide is equivalent to deciding. Of course investigation and reflection are good things, but when they mean the indefinite postponement of action they threaten to paralyse the will. It is good to be a Hamlet,—but only up to a point; for it is not, after all, through your thoroughgoing Hamlets that the business of the world gets done. This then is our situation: it is never right to act before the evidence is all in; it is always right to act before the evidence is all in. We are all original sinners in this sense, that whatever we do, no matter how excellent our intentions, we do wrong.

Morality thus requires of us that we *take sides*. Doubtless no institution or policy or human being is wholly evil, just as none is wholly good. But there will come a moment when we must throw in our lot with one side or the other, when we are forced to assume that one way is right and the other wrong, that one choice represents the good and the other the evil. If we are effectively to destroy evil we must attack it with the best weapons at hand, even though by so doing we run the risk of destroying much that is good at the same time.

But the refusal to compromise with evil too easily becomes a readiness to condemn everything with which evil is associated. The result of living too much with these necessary assumptions is that morality degenerates into partisanship, into the spirit which divides the world into hostile groups whose mutual opposition is their very life. Dominated by this spirit we shall look out upon a world divided against itself; we shall see

men and their works as either wholly good or wholly evil, the white sheep as pure white and the black sheep as dense black. Looking inwards we shall discover the same antithesis: on the one hand, the Flesh, the Senses, the Old Adam, on the other, the Soul, the Reason, the Spiritual Man. And our theories of the universe will reflect our prevailing moral temper. The life of man now becomes an episode in the cosmic warfare between the Powers of Light and the Powers of Darkness, God and the Devil, Spirit and Matter, while his destiny swings between a Heaven of unalloyed bliss and a Hell of unmitigated torment.

But we discover in time that the world cannot be cut up with the hatchet of moral discrimination. Those mental reservations with which we terminated the process of reflection and took sides will make their presence felt; we shall find it intolerable to live in a world of abstract classifications. The world refuses to fit into our schemes. Things reveal themselves as a confusing mixture of good and evil. We find ourselves in some unguarded moment discerning amiable and even admirable qualities in those whom we ought to condemn as vicious; serious faults turn out to be merely the seamy side of virtues; damnable practices produce beneficent results; the boundary line between pleasure and pain becomes, on scrutiny, surprisingly difficult to mark, and the heretics everywhere seem capable of giving a few points to the orthodox.

Yet in the interests of morality we are reluctant to admit these things. The consequences seem too perilous. That type of impartiality which insists that there

is much to be said on both sides seems too like indifference, the love which sees a soul of good in things evil too like sentimental blindness, and the aesthetic intuition which, without judging, exhibits the individual with all his qualities unlovely and lovely too like passive toleration. To talk of beyond good or evil is merely to temporise with the enemy.

But, with this, we confess that the remedy for our discomfort, if remedy there be, lies outside the scope of the practical will. The source of the trouble lies in the necessary assumptions of morality itself: the earnest militant attitude is generating a poison of its own. If we ourselves and our world are to be made whole again we shall have to abandon this attitude and seek restoration in some such experience perhaps as mysticism is concerned to cultivate.

(3) Morality demands not only decisiveness but that we be in earnest with our decisions. We must take our work seriously, 'put our whole self' into it. We must behave as if every commitment were final and as if every enterprise were the absolute good. This in fact is a true description of our attitude when we are absorbed. The cause or the task engages and satisfies all of us, it gathers up into its service all our interests. We need not go elsewhere to find the good. It is here now. Our devotion exhibits a quality which earns for itself properly the name religious, and the object of it is called God.

Yet the resolve to treat the partial good as the total good, the particular as the universal, though justified in practice, has involved us in falsehood. No one par-

ticular can exhaust the universal, and the original distortion of the truth will eventually make itself felt. That it does so is sufficiently attested by the familiar (and wholesome) dread of the specialist, whether he puts in an appearance in the court-room, the nursery, the sick-room, or the Academy. For the specialist has no common sense, that is, no sense of the things that are common: he is over-concentrated and sees the pathological symptom and not the offender, the intelligence-quotient in place of the child, the tonsil but not the patient, the use of the caesura but not the poem.

But your specialist—and as practical beings we are all specialists—is not unaware of the blindness which may befall him.

The sense of discomfort reveals itself in two ways. First, we discover that with over-concentration we have lost sight of the end. Our work has become mechanical and therefore pointless. In becoming masters of the means we find that the means have mastered us. If our own age is bewildered it is in part because some perception of the futility of mere technique has dawned upon us. Prizing responsibility, insisting upon strenuosity and success, expert in all the devices of efficiency and the division of labour, we know not what to do with our efficiency except to devote it to developing greater efficiency, nor with our time except to spend it in inventing means for saving more time. Our profits are all reinvested in the business of living. "Business for business' sake" ought to mean a disinterested enthusiasm for business: in fact it now means the senseless occupation of "stimulating production" and "keeping

the wheels of industry moving." "Truth for Truth's sake" has come to mean pedantry, "Art for Art's sake" decoration or sheer wilfulness, "Duty for Duty's sake" drudgery.

What has happened is that the various ends we have proposed to ourselves, each claiming to be the absolute good and to exist for its own sake, have become alienated from each other. In losing touch with each other they have lost touch with "life"—with that universal good which each in turn vainly tries to embody. Our predicament is that we can no longer see how our partial goods or specialisms belong together. We see that none of these things prosper in solitude, that such threatened division of sovereignty is intolerable and that the separate claimants must somehow learn to live together. The problem is to learn how to bring this to pass. All we can be sure of is that since the impulse to action has been extinguished by our taking too seriously the assumptions of action, the corrective must come through some reversal of the direction of practical attention.[3]

The other form in which the discomfort makes it-

[3] Professor Irving Babbitt's book, The New Laocoön, "An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts," contains an interesting illustration of the consequences of over-specialization in the field of the arts. He there shows how the lines of distinction between the several arts are tending to disappear, poetry trying to become pictorial, sculpture to become dramatic, colour imitating music—witness the symphonies of the colour-organ. Professor Babbitt himself deplores this tendency, but it may, after all, be a healthy symptom, as if the several arts, each weary of its own policy of rigorous self-determination, were seeking blindly to find their way back to some community of spirit and purpose.

self known is a mood for which it is hard to find a name. In it are blended scrupulousness and detachment. Having come to doubt the worth of the thing we are doing, we pursue the process of reflection further and we end in the familiar state of mind in which no object can command our loyalty because to select any one is to sacrifice all the others. All choice, it has been said, is destructive of possibilities. We may reach a pass where this is no longer an abstract proposition but a truth made real to us in agony of indecision. Decision is paralysed by the thought of the might-have-beens. All good things appear equally good and therefore a preference for any one means the irrevocable surrender of all the rest. Facing such a world of independent goods we can never be sure that private loss is public gain, we can be sure that private gain is loss, both private and public. We may know what it is to sacrifice but not what it is to renounce, we may gain temporary success but never permanent achievement.

If in the foregoing I have chosen to analyse the *malaise* of the moral life in its extreme forms that is only because such a method offers the best chance both for a correct diagnosis and for the discovery of a cure. It is clear that the real source of the trouble lies in being too persistent in the necessary assumptions of responsible action. These assumptions exercise a kind of fascination over the mind; without our conscious consent the partial truths with which we set out establish a claim to be the whole truth, partial goods to be the total good. The road turns out to be down hill and the acceleration due to gravity (both metaphorically

and literally) gets a hold upon us. The attempt at self-recovery through any deliberate effort of will, such as assuring ourselves that we *ought* to see value in the things that have unaccountably lost it, is hopeless. This is only to make the bearings still hotter. If we are to be re-equipped again for confident action there must come a pause in the life of effort, not merely to provide for a moral holiday in the sense of a relaxation, but in order that we may recapture that kind of experience in which some particular enterprise appears to us, without effort, as a concrete embodiment of the good. In short, we may say that if morality means *making good* we must first *see* good, and not only first see good but recover our vision of it whenever the making of good becomes self-defeating.

To see good in this sense is the goal of the mystic.

CHAPTER XI

BEYOND GOOD OR EVIL

THE preceding chapter was concerned with showing that the life of practical morality produces strains which may find appropriate relief in mystical experience. Making good, if that may serve to describe the essence of the moral task, is not enough. Man needs also to see good. In the present chapter our purpose is to show that seeing good is not enough. The mystical moment is not self-contained: it passes by inherent necessity into making good.

Let us leave generalities and come to some particular illustrations of this principle.

Love—and I use the term here in its widest sense to include parental love, love between the sexes, and the love of the saint for his fellow man—is a form of seeing good. It reaches some point beyond good or evil in the other individual and from this position it is able to say, 'Neither do I condemn thee.' Popular opinion discerns in such a judgment only love's traditional blindness. And, indeed, love does not seem to attach much importance to the classifications of the shrewd practical world which, with mind unclouded by emotion, is insistent to separate the good from the bad in men. Yet this superiority to conventional judgments does not mean indifference, any more than forgiveness means the abandonment of criticism. It is no mere negative attitude; it indicates the working of a positive insight

into the character of the other individual such that the division of him into a good self and a bad self is seen to be inadequate. The discovery which genuine love announces is the revelation of the other individual in his wholeness, no longer a mere meeting place of abstract universals, 'good,' 'bad,' etc. No human being can be 'saved' unless he has in him the power to recognise the saving ideal when it is presented to him; the achievement of love is to perceive that power in the other being. What is bad in him thus ceases to have the last word.

Yet all this may seem dogmatic assertion. To outward observation love's so-called insight seems indistinguishable from indifference. Are there then any marks by which we may recognise the authentic insight?

Love wears an air of assurance towards the future. It is confident that its judgment, however radical or absurd-seeming now, will eventually win general corroboration. He whom the saint calls brother will become a brother in fact as well as in promise; the man and the woman who have experienced the mutual revelation of love know for a certainty that no future discovery of the details of each other's characters can cancel their present insight. Love stakes its policy on a prophecy, it acts now as though that prophecy were true.

But its prophecy has to be made good. Forgiveness, for example, imposes a responsibility on the forgiver to work to bring to fulfilment that character whose possibilities have already been discerned. The love

of man and woman, while it is in one sense a final achievement, has to be worked into the texture of daily living. The love which is not equivalent at least to this kind of active good will and which rejects responsibility is an impostor. Its true name is sentimentality.

The genuine insight may be known, then, by the impulse inherent in it to complete its own meaning by creating the substance of things hoped for.

From this point of view we can understand in part the workings of that process. In so far as we are now concerned with the manner of approach to the moral failings of the individual the method of love may be identified with non-resistance. The first object of this policy is to make the other individual accept one's judgment of his ultimate quality. If I meet wrath with a soft answer it is because I know that the angry man has momentarily forgotten himself and I propose to recall him to his senses. If I meet persistent misinterpretation of my motives with an equally steady refusal to take offence, it is because I discern some seed of fair judgment in my critic and I propose to give it a favourable climate to grow in. My non-resistance, when it is valid, is never mere generosity and kindness: it is the attempt to make my opponent see in himself what I see in him, to lift him in sight of his own ultimate integrity.

Further, if two individuals have reached this common level of insight it is not necessary for either to ignore the faults of the other. Criticism need neither be discarded nor suppressed. Indeed, it is only those who are not united by this bond of understanding who

need fear mutual criticism, for if there is no common platform from which criticism may be regarded *impersonally,* the finding of fault may become interminable—and deadly.

> The sphere of the argumentative intellect is the world where all things exist by way of balance of opposites, where for every black there is a white, and for every *pro* a *con;* and, if we lived only by the intellect, there could be no progress, for argument could be met by equal argument. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is the justice of the intellect, and that warfare may go on for ever. We can only escape from an eternity of opposites by rising above them like that spirit which fixed the balance in the heavens and made equal centrifugal and centripetal. It was that spirit which would fain have admitted man to its own sphere, showing how to escape from the dominion of the opposites by rising above them. It counselled forgiveness until seventy times seven—a hard saying, no doubt, to those who have just cause for offence. But it is the only way by which we can be melted and made one in the higher spheres. . . .[1]

Thus we can say that criticism without love is a vain clash of weapons, while love without criticism is blind sentiment. Neither without the other is complete. From criticism we ascend to love, from love descend to criticism.

Prayer, when successful, is another example of seeing good in the sense here intended. By prayer I do not mean the petition for particular good things, whether spiritual or material. This represents merely the at-

[1] "A. E." [George Russell], Letter to The Irish Times, Dec. 25, 1917.

tempt to get by magic what we might properly hope to achieve by natural methods. Living only on the exploitation of human weakness and ignorance, it is destined to be discredited by every increase in knowledge and self-respect. But there is another kind of prayer, still petitional in form, wholly general in direction, which seeks that which is presumably unattainable by our own effort—sanity and wholeness. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Such prayer is more than a vague yearning after righteousness: it involves the hard work of self-scrutiny. He who prays must examine himself in the light of the best he knows, deepening his knowledge of whatever is vile in himself. And in facing his faults he must repudiate them; the Old Adam one must disown as being alien.

But here we meet the peculiar predicament of prayer. What assurance can a man have either that he may not at any time abandon the process of self-analysis too soon or that the process may not be in principle interminable? For, on the one hand, the self-knowledge of any man, even aided by the arts of social criticism, goes but a little way. He may think that his heart is truly disciplined when, as a fact, the light that is in him is darkness. On the other hand, if he recognises this danger, what is there left to say but that he can never hope to close the critical account? The only way to guard against premature satisfaction is to hold open the possibility that there are deeper strata of evil in the self to be explored. This is the moment in experience when the doctrine of original sin and the power-

lessness of the sinner to save himself declare their truth and get their hold upon the mind.

For the moment all I am concerned to point out is that in prayer the problem of prayer is somehow solved. As a fact, the sinner does emerge from prayer with the conviction that he is free. Hope has returned. He has 'left his burden at the foot of the Cross'; he can make a fresh start, not with any animal assurance or aggressive healthy-mindedness, but in a spirit at once chastened and confident. His sins have not ceased to be sins, but they no longer paralyse his movements.

The experience which has produced this change of temper might be described, in the most formal and external fashion, as the act of realising the presupposition of one's prayer. 'Thou couldst not seek Me hadst thou not already found Me.' That painful self-criticism was made possible by some effective grasp upon the ideal, was, in fact, the evident working of the ideal in and upon the self. Thus the success of prayer might be defined as an immediate realisation of the truth that 'to recognise a limit is to be already beyond it, in idea.' From this point of view we can see why prayer is a process in which sin is overcome by the very act of repudiating it, yet overcome not in detail but in principle. To adopt the ideal is to identify oneself with it and that is the first necessary condition of 'salvation.' But it is not a sufficient condition. The ideal is but the framework of character, all the rest has to be built in. Thus prayer would not be prayer unless it created that paradoxical consciousness of guilt and perfection, of humility and confidence, of selflessness and power.

So far we have been illustrating the necessity of the connection between seeing good and making good. We may now try to formulate the general principle upon which this necessity seems to depend. It may be expressed thus: Whatever valuable quality in objects a mind can appreciate is thereby shown to be a property of that mind. The easiest way to grasp what this principle means is to recall some of its common practical applications.

Why do we attach importance to modesty, to humility, to self-effacement? Why do we agree with the sentiment expressed in Lao Tze's dictum, "The self-displaying man cannot shine"? Why is it that when contemporary sophistication tries to sweep these ancient virtues into the discard with a contemptuous reference to inferiority-complexes the inward monitor will whisper 'Bosh!'? The answer is that these things are admirable not as deliberately cultivated states of mind, but as symptoms. There is nothing desirable about modesty as an end in itself; in so far as it is accompanied by self-consciousness it is false; even the Socratic profession of ignorance has a touch of irony, contains an element of pose, which detracts from its worth. The modesty we esteem is the modesty we expect to find in those who are devoted to some ideal. It is the man who has wrestled longest with the problems of philosophy who is likely to be most impressed with the complexity of the issues and to have the deepest reverence for truth. It is he, therefore, who will be able to perceive the smallness of his own contribution. "All I have done," Bergson is reported to have said to a too

gushing disciple, "all I have done is to throw light on a few tiny points of detail." The one hopeless state is complacency. Hope comes with the dawn of humility, for humility is the sign that one has caught sight of that thing greater than oneself whereby one judges oneself.

But our judgment has a positive as well as a negative side. We not only condemn the lack of modesty as fatal, we are ready to attribute to a man the properties of the ideal at which he aims, for his modesty is the sign of the ideal at work in him. We take the will for the deed and good intentions are more than half the battle. Without such generosity in judging human life would be intolerable. If justice consisted in giving every man what he deserved on the basis of actual performance it would mean a short shrift for most, even if the preliminary difficulty of finding anyone qualified to mete out justice had been overcome. If human justice is more than natural justice—*i.e.*, than the survival of the fittest in a harshly competitive world—it is because in dealing with human beings we are dealing with creatures in the making and therefore their promise as well as their achievement must be considered in casting up the account. Thus, without regard to the level attained, a man is properly treated as honest or faithful or frank or considerate of others in so far as he is in earnest with these things. If he is working for them they are working for and in him. The man is where his treasure is.

Perhaps the most conspicuous use of our principle is where the values concerned belong to the life of some

social group—a profession, a nation, a church. In so far as the individual identifies himself with the life and purpose of the group he appropriates its power and significance. In a time when theories of "the social self" and their exaggerated claims are enjoying a vogue, it is hardly necessary to give specific illustrations. But those theories, though carried to an extreme in the suggestion that the individual is simply a part or a function or a differentiation of "the social whole," are based on the indisputable fact that the individual is not made significant by the extent to which he excludes from his interests the elements of the common life. On the contrary, to be loyal to these more comprehensive social ideals is to appropriate them, and the worth of the individual is enhanced by his willingness to serve them.

We may now revert to the principle as first stated and look at it more closely. "Whatever valuable quality in objects a mind can appreciate is thereby shown to be a property of that mind." This differs from the familiar thesis that to recognise a limit is to be beyond it, for appreciation means more than knowledge—it means knowledge *plus* adoption. That will-to-be-honest, for example, through which honesty comes to be imputed to a man, involves not merely an intellectual apprehension of honesty as a moral principle but adoption of or dedication to honesty as an end. The distinction is necessary, for, unless we are going to give a special meaning to the word 'know,' it seems clear that we can recognise values without identifying ourselves with them. One may be a person of catholic sympathies

and therefore able through imagination to achieve an aesthetic understanding of types of character which yet make no practical appeal to one. One may understand the attractions of the life of the recluse or of the statesman or of the arctic explorer without feeling drawn to any of these careers, however admirable in themselves. What is true of the knowledge of good is still more obviously true of the knowledge of evil. I may admire a Napoleon—yet have no wish to be like him. A De Quincey may thrill me with the thought of murder as a fine art without rousing any homicidal tendencies in me.

Granted, then, that appreciation means first getting hold of and then adopting the idea, it is not difficult to see why those two steps should be emphasised as the necessary prerequisites of making good. The first requirement for becoming truthful, for example, is a grasp upon truthfulness as a universal. The virtue cannot be acquired piecemeal, by the learning of particular acts or special rules. One may point out that truthfulness means truthfulness in deed as well as in word, that one can lie by suggestion, by silence, by suppression of the truth; one may insist upon the difference between historical or scientific and poetic truth, between brutal frankness and tact, between justifiable reticence and truth-telling; one may elaborate the doctrine that it takes two to make the truth, and so on. But this way of teaching truthfulness is futile. There is no end to these refinements and one cannot hope to exhaust all the relevant situations or distinctions. The learner may have mastered all our instructions and still have

the lie in the soul. He may have done his duty and still be an unprofitable servant, for the essential thing has been missed: that he should first grasp the universal idea of truthfulness as a disposition of will, a spirit or principle of interpretation to be brought to bear upon particular instances. With this, the first great obstacle has been overcome: the rest is a matter of application of the idea to details.

But this is not enough. The second requirement is, as we have seen, that the idea shall become an ideal, shall be in such wise appropriated as to provoke self-criticism and arouse the desire for self-improvement.

A further clarification of the doctrine we have been expounding and illustrating may conveniently be undertaken by considering a criticism often brought against it. In practice, it is urged, the doctrine has its dangers. If we tell a man that the will is equivalent to the deed, may he not take us at our word and offer us everything but—deeds? If the disinterested servant of truth or beauty or goodness may say, 'Not I, but Beauty or Truth that worketh in me,' and yet, vicariously, take credit for what, by admission, is none of his doing, why may not smaller men see in all this a sanction for *laissez faire?* The danger is most real and conspicuous where through loyalty to some group the individual is supposed to share in the qualities and achievements of the group. The college student may have contributed nothing towards the victory of the football team, but, as college loyalty is now interpreted, he may feel that the triumph is his as well as the team's. The sun never sets on the British Empire,

but that hardly justifies the attitude of a certain type of Englishman who moves about the world with the conscious assurance that the sun never sets upon *him,* whatever may be the fate in this respect of lesser breeds without the Law. In short, does not our principle lend itself too readily to exploitation by the lazy or the sentimental?

I do not propose to deny the facts. Wherever loyalty and corporate enthusiasm are exalted you find the tendency to treat feeling as an equivalent for effort. Yet it is only fair to add that this situation may be caused by the qualities of laziness and sentimentality rather than by the principle itself. But the one valid answer to the criticism is to point out that anyone who exploits the doctrine on his own behalf admits that he has betrayed it. If I am right in saying that in some parts of life, my power, my success, my virtues are derivative, are, in fact, the fruits of my disinterested devotion to my 'cause,' then I cannot be right in saying that this establishes the claims of self-interest. If I am entitled to a type of approval only if I set my heart upon some object, X, I cannot in logic or justice look for that approval when I consciously set my heart upon myself and not upon X.

But the question may persist: How do you distinguish the genuine from the false devotion? Here the only answer I see is, By their fruits ye shall know them. Royce, who in his philosophy of loyalty has given the most notable contemporary expression of the doctrine in question, insisted that loyalty must be practical, showing itself in deeds. And this does not connote

something merely arbitrary in the definition of loyalty. In the very nature of things, the value conferred upon me by my loyalty is not a final acquisition or achievement: it is a crag round which I have thrown the noose of idea; now I can haul on the rope. It represents the beginning not the end of moral effort.

This then is the sense in which we are to interpret the mystical vision of the good. It is a *prescience* of the good, a foreknowing in its totality of that which moral effort has to establish in detail. It is at once an end and a beginning, and it is only one because it is the other.

If we define the task of the practical will negatively as the victory over evil rather than positively as the consolidation of the good, then mysticism might be defined as the conscious alliance with a power by which all evil is prospectively conquerable. It is through this alliance that the mystic can claim to have triumphed over evil. But this remains to the end a vicarious achievement. It is the insight which means neither alone "All is well," nor yet alone "All can be made good," but both of these at once.

CHAPTER XII

MYSTICISM AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

ALL is well—All can be made good." To men of good will this dark saying probably conveys as much meaning as such sayings are fitted to bear, but one must not presuppose that kind of reader, so I will try to make it less cryptic by devoting a chapter to a closer study of mystical optimism.

To see the distinguishing marks of this attitude we need to recall some of the traditional ways of dealing with evil with which it stands contrasted. Let me therefore offer a rapid survey of these.

All so-called solutions of the problem come back ultimately to the judgment that evil is in some sense less real than good. The most familiar form in which this judgment is expressed runs: Evil is a means to good. Theories and solutions vary in accordance with the special kind of good selected.

(1) Evil as contributory to 'the good of the whole.' The universe as a whole is good: everything has a place in the divine economy. If we could see life under the form of eternity we should realise that, as there are no weeds in nature, so there are no ultimate evils in reality. There have been many historic variations upon this simple theme: evil as illusory, evil as privation of good, evil as good 'in disguise,' as good out of place, as 'something torn from its context,' as the shade in the

picture, as a necessary but disappearing factor in 'the world-process when taken as a whole.' I am not now interested in the various shades of difference but in the general resemblances between these theories. We may note two. First, the good of the whole is something formal and abstract. We are not told *what* the good is, nor what is our relation to it; we are assured simply *that* there is a good and that if we could discern it our judgment of evil would be transformed. Short of such discernment we are left with little more than an arbitrary will-to-be-optimistic *plus* a number of metaphors of doubtful value. Secondly, evil is not disposed of: it is simply given a different place and name. It is now transferred to the finite minds with their 'limited points of view.' The devil has not been annihilated or deposed or even *aufgehoben:* he has been identified with the fatal human tendency to see things *sub specie temporis.* But it still remains an evil neither to be explained nor banished that creatures with such distressing 'points of view' should exist.

(2) Evil as a means to the development of character,—"soul-making." The evidence that suggests and seems to justify this solution is too familiar to call for elaboration. It is easy to see how opposition, risk, hardship, bereavement, ignorance, etc., may produce salutary effects. But how far can this idea be stretched as a principle of explanation? It is doubtless true that there is a sense in which 'the universe is all the better for having a devil in it,' but the issue touches not so much the fact of the devil's existence as his size and power. It is not opposition but the amount of it which

appals us. When we have written off so much of the world's evil to the account of soul-making there would seem to be a vast quantity of superfluous opposition left. And, if we choose to look at the other side of the picture, we must be struck with the way in which adversity has weakened character, extinguished hope, suffocated human talent and frustrated human promise. There is no satisfactory basis for optimism here. The principle invoked to justify evil is the same as that which underlies the attempt to exploit the doctrine of natural selection for the same purpose. Provided that we do not propose to use 'fit' and 'survived' as interchangeable terms, natural selection justifies us in saying that those who have survived are fit: it does not justify us in saying that only the fit have survived. Souls have been unmade as well as made by the journey through this vale of woe, but these unknown multitudes have left no record. Dead men tell no tales. Yet in seeking to characterise the journey we must consider the meaning of their fate as well as that of the survivors.

(3) Evil as a means to appreciation. The romantic solution. The presence of evil heightens our sense of the dangerousness, the vastness and the splendour of the universe. The one thing to be got out of life is—*thrills,* whether it be the thrill of excitement or the thrill of tragic reconciliation. Dragons are not to be slain, but to be kept, like the tame and obliging stag in some countries, and hunted for the fun of the thing. The sport is all. God Himself, on this theory, becomes a spectator for whom the world's drama is played, or a twice-born Deity whose life is an eternal fall and

conversion, or a playful Deity who eternally creates His own antagonists for the sake of eternally overcoming them, or in some other way 'goes out into otherness and returns upon Himself.'

The elements of weakness in this doctrine have often been pointed out and there is no need to go over familiar ground. It is enough to observe that this is essentially a philosophy of failure. It offers consolation, and sanctions resignation, by the wholly natural yet fatal device of referring us from the outer world to the inner. One fails—but, see! it is not, after all, a complete failure: something has been saved from the wreck, enhanced appreciation, insight, emotion. True, this is not what we wanted: we set out to slay the dragon, but, even though we did not slay him, is it not something to have realised how dragon-fighting adds to the zest of life? Here is consolation, but here also is a certain cooling of enthusiasm, a falling-off in earnestness. When dragon-fighting has become a sport it has lost most of its seriousness. Thus this philosophy is good for those in whom failure has already induced a mood of detachment and who are already disposed to take life as spectators.

And this, in effect, is the general criticism we have to pass on all the optimistic 'solutions' that we have examined. In all of them the individual is represented as standing off from and contemplating a universe in which the good and the evil are so many separate facts or qualities, and his problem is to get 'a point of view' from which they may be harmonised. The mixture of good and evil, just as it stands, is somehow automati-

cally to justify itself, irrespective of the individual's practical attitude. The consequence is that we are offered nothing but mechanical solutions—the good is supposed to 'cancel' or to 'outweigh' or to 'offset' or to be 'heightened by' the evil in the total account. Yet there is no conceivable way by which any amount of good could outweigh a single evil deed; a universe which was all good (in a quantitative sense) except for one sin or one pang would be an imperfect universe: it would have a radical flaw in it. That is why these optimisms all lead in the end to pessimism.

But there is another kind of optimism, which we may call active, to distinguish it from the passive temper of mind revealed in those we have been discussing. It defines the problem of evil differently. The problem, according to this interpretation, is not the purely theoretical one of explaining evil, of justifying it after the event, but the practical one of becoming reconciled to it. We do not say: Here is evil; now how are we to transform that, under the speculative gaze, into something less than evil? but: Here is evil; how can I hold my head up, how can I retain my sanity and 'carry on' in a world where such things are done in the light of the sun?

By distinguishing between the theoretical and the practical forms of the problem I do not mean to imply that they are in principle separable and that the latter can be solved apart from the former. The will must build upon fact, and a change in my attitude towards evil will require a re-interpretation of evil. But it makes a considerable difference whether we emphasise

the practical or the theoretical requirement in the original formulation of the problem.

When we define the problem as that of become reconciled (not resigned) to evil we have to note at the outset that this presupposes the possibility of a confident, militant attitude towards evil, the attitude which declares: "Let me know the worst about the universe. I am not afraid. There is nothing so bad that it cannot in time be made good, nothing that will make me abandon the universe and desert my post." It is the creating of this temper of mind that constitutes the greatest practical achievement of mysticism. If Stoicism is, in Gilbert Murray's phrase, the failure of nerve, mysticism is the recovery of nerve. "Tolstoy," wrote William James, "does well to talk of it as *that by which men live,* for that is exactly what it is, a stimulus, an excitement, a faith, a force that re-infuses the positive willingness to live, even in full presence of the evil perceptions that erewhile made life seem unbearable." It is one of the ironies of partisanship that when Nietzsche poured his scorn upon the miserable crawling Christians and sang the praises of the strong and the yea-sayers, he did not see how beautifully the type he despised exhibited his own will-to-power. "I would have goblins about me!" cries Zarathustra, because he knows that his courage is sufficient to lay all ghosts and to put to rout all questionable shapes. The strong man is hungry for opposition in order that he may feel and prove his strength in overcoming it. The Christian saint, the ascetic, and the mystic, have a passion for persecution and for martyr-

dom, a driving need to know the worst about life, because these things are but fuel to the mounting flame of their devotion. In these things they prove the quality of their love: they feel the blade of the will taking hold. This is the optimism of the mystics, this is their practical solution of the problem of evil. But since this attitude is not mere postulate, the theoretical question arises: What must be true about the universe to justify it?

We may gain some light by considering the answer of the pluralist. Monistic theories, he declares, are what stand in the way of a militant optimism. Once abandon the idea that there is any one point of view which can take in the whole universe, give up the attempt to trace the good and the evil to a common source or to a common principle of explanation, and you are then free to look upon evil as an enemy which is to be shut out and abolished. Moreover, if we no longer refer the evil to one nature of things, but to two or more independent sources, then there is no amount of evil that can possibly justify a radical pessimism, for evil, being independent of good, cannot infect it. We may thus learn to take experience piecemeal, taking the good and the evil as they come, grateful for the one, disowning and warring upon the other.

For my present purpose it will be sufficient to suggest three criticisms. First, this device does not solve the problem of evil: it merely eliminates it. There would be no problem unless the judgment of good conflicted with the judgment of evil, but they cannot conflict unless these two qualities are predicated of the

same subject. Insulate good from evil, as this method would have us do, cancel the reference to one universal subject or substance, and the problem of harmonising them disappears. Second, if it is true that since the evil has no bearing upon the good no amount of evil can lead us to deny the presence of good, then it must also be true that no amount of good, past, present, or future, can make up for the evil. Both are ultimates. Third, confidence, assurance, open-mindedness,—and these are the things we have agreed to require—are impossible in a pluralistic universe. There can be no basis for confidence, because there can be no basis for expectation of any kind. The good that we do may be undone because there is nothing to conserve it; the evil that we suppress may waken to life and appear in new forms. For all we know to the contrary, we may be ploughing the sand or writing in water. Not exactly fit symbols for practical optimism to adopt!

There is no value in working up the antithesis between a too radical pluralism and a too radical monism: a situation where there are two mutually exclusive theories, each of which must live upon the omissions and failures of the other, calls not for aggravation but for cure. And this is the point at which the mystics have something to offer, for they reveal the futility of this strife. Radical monism makes the universe too safe, radical pluralism makes it too risky. The requirement we make is, as we have said, paradoxical: we want security and we want danger—enough of each to give meaning to the other. In the historic bearing of the mystic towards this situation we seem to see the

solution applied, if not explicitly defined. For the mystic is he who in the conscious presence of the perils of life knows himself secure, and who even as he squarely confronts evil knows that it has not the final word. Optimism and pessimism, strenuousness and serenity, the acknowledgment of evil and the disowning of it, are here united. If there is any tenable solution of the problem of evil we can say at once that it will be found in the theory of the universe upon which this attitude rests.

And, as for his theory, the mystic has not left us wholly in the dark about that. In the first place, he insists that he finds reality not merely prospectively good, but good *now*. And is he not justified? Reality could not even be prospectively good unless it contained even now the promise of that fulfilment and was so far absolutely good. The universe could not *grow* good unless it had a body to grow on. I can put neither intelligence nor enthusiasm behind my efforts to make the world better unless I know that there is some permanent substance in the world which will accept and assimilate those deeds of mine which harmonise with its own nature. Secondly, for the mystic, this substance is God, a Being with whom one can have communion, in whose life one can to some degree participate. Here again I discern no escape from the mystic's assertion, if it be granted that his practical attitude towards evil must give the clue to the theoretical solution. Unless there is Mind at the heart of the universe there is no way of understanding how that universe can contain evil and yet be good. If there is

a God whose omnipotence might be defined as being equal to any emergency, whose insight could interpret and place all evil, and whose passion could consume and transmute it; if, further, I can ally myself with Him so that His power becomes mine, then I can see how the universe's problem and mine may be solved. And this is the victory that the mystic reports. He has become one with the God who is in the world reconciling it unto Himself. Here is the ground of his assurance. The mystic alone can read the black book of pessimism to the end, burking none of the world's tragedy and chaos, and still retain the militant address towards evil, because he is the conscious ally of that by which the evil may be conquered.

I have been chiefly concerned in this chapter with optimism as one of the contributions of mysticism to the conduct of life and with elucidating its characteristic quality. If in the last two paragraphs I have carried the exposition into the region of the ultimate problems of metaphysics, it is not with any intention of suggesting that mysticism has given a finished solution to the problem of evil. Here, as elsewhere, we may claim only that the mystic offers suggestions for a solution. He has not made philosophy superfluous in this matter; on the contrary, he has made it necessary. He has set a task for philosophy, for he does not expound his interpretation of evil so much as live it. To exhibit that life and to make clear some of its theoretical presuppositions is all that we have attempted to do.

CHAPTER XIII

MYSTICISM AND FREEDOM

THE agonised individual conscience of Protestantism is no longer fashionable. The social conscience is now in vogue. But we shall be mistaken if we think that the change has diminished the agonising. For we live today under the tyrannical requirement of an ideal of 'service.' That individual is unfortunate who by temperament is scrupulous or unconventional or reflective or contemplative. He cannot possess his soul in peace, for he is assured on all sides that he must do a man's work in the world: he must be efficient, he must realise his social obligations. He is asked to think continually of what contribution he is making towards the welfare of mankind, the happiness of future generations, or the saving of civilisation.

One need not doubt the value of these ends, but one may raise the question whether they are best served by being thus set in the foreground of the mind. One may be so eager to hit the bull's eye that one misses the mark altogether, and one may be so preoccupied with the desire to be of use to society that one loses the opportunity to do what one was best fitted to perform. If we fail thus in effectiveness it is because we have not been free to be honest with ourselves. We have been distracted by that too urgent and insistent demand to note the social consequences, immediate or remote, of our enterprises. We have been nagged into diminishing the

scope of our effort from the breadth of its original disinterestedness to suit some narrow utilitarian requirement.

Let us proceed to exhibit the consequences in some detail.

Consider first the case of the artist and his relation to "the public." It is a platitude to observe that the artist who has to keep his weather eye open for the caprices of the censor or for the more popular demand that art shall be didactic, improving, or 'wholesome,' is cramped in choice of subject and in expression and is doomed to inferior work. But even the more general claim that, as creative artist, his inspiration is to be determined by the requirements, however important, of any audience, contemporary or ideal, is open to the same criticism. True, no man can live for an indefinite time wholly upon his own moral tissue, happy in the approval of his own conscience, without appeal to his fellows, to posterity, or to some ideal judge of his performance. But such social approval is important only as the test of work done, and it affects the artist's evaluation of his work not in his capacity of creative artist but in his capacity of philosopher reflectively passing judgment upon the total significance of his work. As artist pure and simple what he creates and how he creates it must be a matter wholly between himself and Beauty as he apprehends it. Any social obligation cutting across that major loyalty to Beauty absolute means distraction and wasted effort, the result of which will be not (say) poetry but propaganda or rhetoric. "We make out of the quarrel with others,

rhetoric; but out of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry."[1] What is true of poetry holds good of the other arts—they must have their birth in freedom. The ultimate moral and social consequences of such art can be trusted to take care of themselves.

The same principle is valid where human action is quite explicitly concerned with social benefit. The work of doing good to others over its whole range from the simplest alleviation of human misery to the missionary ambition of saving souls, is notoriously a difficult and, for the most part, a thankless task. The reasons for this are many, but some of them spring from the essential nature of the relationship involved between the doer and the recipient of good. It is with these that we are concerned.

"If I knew for a certainty," wrote Thoreau, "that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life as from that dry and parching wind of the African deserts called the simoom, which fills the mouth and nose and ears and eyes with dust till you are suffocated, for fear I should get some of his good done to me,—some of its virus mingled with my blood."

"To the far greater number of average commonsense people who pride themselves on a freedom from sentiment and mysticism, the eminently practical side of Christ's spirit will make a strong appeal. . . . His disdain of prophecy and miracle and of any other pre-

[1] W. B. Yeats. With this saying one may compare two others on the same subject. "Rhetoric is heard, poetry is overheard." "Rhetoric is an effort; poetry, a relief."

ternatural criterion of discipleship as compared with the criterion of that charity of experimental goodness that feeds the hungry and clothes the naked,—all this and much more makes out an easy and most plausible case for 'Practicality.' *Circuibat benefaciendo:* He went about doing good. 'Doing Good' seems to be the whole of the matter; more especially that sort of good that involves 'going about.' "[2]

The thought of being reformed arouses resentment on two grounds. First, self-respect causes us to regard such intrusion as an intolerable impertinence. I may be quite alive to my own defects and to the need of improvement, but that is an affair between myself and my conscience or between myself and my Maker. I do not propose to have any busybody, however excellent his intentions, trespassing there. Secondly, the would-be reformer is guilty of presumptuousness. Has he no failings of his own to overcome that he should feel called on to preach to others? Let him first remove the beam from his own eye.

These criticisms are just. But we cannot be content to leave the matter there, discarding all attempts at reform or altruism as misguided. We cannot tell each individual to 'work out his own salvation with diligence.' For, on any theory of life, men need to be 'saved,' and it is precisely those who most need it who are not going to take the trouble to work out their own salvation. If they cared enough to make the effort they would already be on the way to salvation. There must,

[2] George Tyrrell, Lex Credendi, p. 78.

then, be some conditions under which the policy of reforming others is tolerable. What are they?

We may find an answer by considering that charge of presumptuousness. It is clear that if, in an imperfect world, we wait until we are assured of our own blamelessness before beginning to save others we shall never get anything done. No one will ever be ready to begin. In the end therefore, only a perfect being, not subject to human limitations, can undertake to save mankind. If, then, I am to undertake to save my neighbour I must assume a divine function. But so to define my presumptuousness is to take away its hatefulness. For I now act vicariously, as God's representative, not as this pathetic, solitary, puny individual; *his* claims I have laid aside in taking on the universal responsibility. I cease, if I am sincere, to suggest by my bearing anything superior or patronising. Further, I now address myself to my neighbour not as to some self-sufficient person in a world of independent selves, each with his rights and his sanctities of personal boundary, but as to one who in the presence of the thought of God stands on the same level with myself of human finitude and sinfulness. I appeal to him in the name of the God who is his God and mine. Before that common (and mutual?) recognition there should be room for nothing but humility.

But if we have thus expressed the sole condition under which the missionary relationship is tolerable we have still to ask what it is that leads a man to undertake the rôle of God's representative in the work of salvation. The answer lies in the character we have

attributed to the reformer. We have said, in effect, that he must first be prophet. And it is the *vision* of God that makes the prophet. It is something seen, loved, and adopted in the way of truth, beauty, or goodness, that sends the prophet looking for others whom he may initiate into the great secret. In short one must be an evangel, one must have good news, before one can become a missionary that men either will or should listen to.

To drop the language of theology and put the thing in general terms, we may say that the successful reformers are those who are seeking not so much to 'make people good' as to share an enthusiasm. The change they may work in others is a by-product of some disinterested devotion. I am justified in attacking my neighbour's meanness or duplicity only in so far as I am manifestly inspired by a love of generosity and integrity. My efforts can then be interpreted as an attempt to recall him to his ideal and mine. I do not plan his voyage, I merely propose to correct his compass. I am like the man in Plato's Allegory of the Cave who knew that his chief task was to turn the prisoners round so that they could face in the direction of the sun. The sun would do the rest.

As a final illustration of the necessity for freedom we may notice how the conditions of the moral life may themselves become barriers to moral progress. The individual cannot, even if he would, make himself independent of the customs, the institutions and the moral code of his society. These things represent for the most part the historical deposit of generations of

experiment; they sum up a range of experience and reflection which is beyond the scope of the individual, and they present to him, if not finished solutions, at any rate suggestions for the solution of the major problems of conduct. In general, then, docility and conformity are what is required of him. This means, first, that choice is limited. The main paths along which his various instincts and impulses may seek satisfaction are already laid down: there are so many careers, so many social groupings—and no more. Secondly, since some measure of visible success is necessary if you are to persist in a choice once made, you find yourself judging the worth of your work and of yourself by the current social standards. You find yourself constantly looking up from your work, so to speak, to see if you are making progress, fulfilling your obligations, being a good citizen, leaving things a little better than you found them, etc.

Thus society furnishes us with a technique and with a test, and these things are necessary. But they are not sufficient. *Unum porro est necessarium*—inspiration or initiative. This society cannot give. The attempt to live exclusively in the light of the strenuously comparative estimate of one's value ends by producing a society whose marks are timidity, conventionality, and uniformity. For the individual it means at worst the suffocation of originality, at best a perpetual uneasiness. One becomes like the runner who continually looks over his shoulder at the other competitors. But the way to run a good race is to keep one's eye on the tape.

In the end, therefore, both the private and the public good require that the individual shall have the chance to transcend the social conditions of morality. He must be free to discover whatever is original in himself and to define his own good in his own way. He will contribute nothing that society will be interested in preserving unless he can from time to time shake himself free from the tyranny of all external requirements and utilitarian tests. He must have that peace of mind which comes from the knowledge that he may address his work in the first instance to the ideal judge of his own and other men's effort.

What it comes to, then, is this: that in our art, in our altruism, our problems of duty, we best hit the relative by aiming at the absolute, and that in such recovery of direction for the will lies the hope of attaining a creative freedom. I have used the term absolute, but I might better have said God, for how else are we to define God if not through the analysis of those experiences which lead us to seek Him? God is then defined, as mysticism would define Him, as the Being who unites and therefore completes the meanings of the diversified forms of human ambition. If mysticism be the search for God in this sense then the hope for creative freedom lies in keeping alive and nourishing the mystical impulse in us.

CHAPTER XIV

MYSTICISM AND INSTITUTIONS

IN the preceding chapter we gave a sketch of freedom in its general meaning of freedom from the oppressive requirements of social usefulness in determining the direction of the individual will. It may help to fill in some of the details of that picture if we consider the social pressure as it bears upon the individual through the demands of the institution, ecclesiastical, political, economic, etc.

We may begin by passing in review a number of criticisms which are frequently brought against the very principle of organisation itself, irrespective of the special forms in which it may be manifested.

Organisation destroys freshness and spontaneity. For the direct and personal relationship between the individual and his fellows or between the individual and God is substituted one indirect and general. It is true that the institution may universalise any particular relation, but it also classifies it and thereby seems to rob it of its uniqueness. The effect of marriage is to transform "I and thou" into "man and wife," and this, while it may mean gain, means also loss. Marriage makes these two into types, sets them over against each other in formal guise, puts them in some sense in the same class with all other married people. If marriage wears away love one reason is that the social mask of Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So has a way of per-

manently concealing the original features. So with the religious institution. One need not elaborate the familiar record: with the growth of ecclesiastical organisation and systems of dogma the early enthusiasm of religion first dwindles and then disappears. The natural gestures of the spirit give way to a formal ritual, the immediate convictions of personal insight harden into an authoritative creed, the distinctive movements of the religious impulse become uniform and automatic.

In the second place, the life of every institution depends upon the willingness of its supporters to compromise. Property, the state, the church, may be necessary for completeness of life, yet, as no one of these is perfect, any alliance with them involves a threat to one's wholeness of mind. For, whatever ideas or dreams we may have of the institution as it might be, we must, if we are to be effective, serve the institution as it actually is, and we cannot have the good of the institution without being partners in the bad. We cannot use money and escape the implications of the fact that "all money is tainted money." We cannot accept parts of the industrial system and escape complicity with the rest. There is no political loyalty which will not commit us to hateful persons and hateful principles. No matter how valiantly we profess our will to "reform the institution from within" we may not avoid the infection of the institution as it is. If the price of personal immaculateness is the complete detachment of the hermit's cell, the price of attachment to the institutions of society is the loss of personal integrity.

Third, the career of any institution exhibits the familiar process in which a means comes to be taken as an end in itself. That which was to bring men nearer to the goal becomes itself the goal. Every liberator becomes a despot. The state, assuming a final and comprehensive authority, proclaims: Thou shalt have none other gods but me. Political allegiance comes forth clothed as a religion. The church which was to save men becomes a monopoly and announces: *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus.* The meaning of property is forgotten and its rights are treated as sacred and inviolable. In short, no institution seems able to retain its soul for long and, losing its soul, it degenerates into a body of death.

This brings us to the last criticism that we need mention. The institution comes in time to own its members instead of being owned by them. It is a common thing to see a woman who believes that she runs her house when, as a matter of fact, she is fast bound to the wheels of the domestic machinery, or to see a man who thinks he owns his automobile but is in truth owned by it. John Galsworthy in his novel, *The Man of Property,* has shown how the love of property may so dominate a man that it becomes indeed his God—the one thing he cannot dispense with, and Samuel Butler in *The Way of All Flesh* reveals the power of the idea of the family to make men its slaves. This is what Christianity seems to have dreaded about the complex forms of social organisation: they had a way of not only claiming but winning an allegiance which turned their servants into slaves. "He that loveth father or

mother more than me . . ." These lesser loyalties were to be held subordinate to the major loyalty of religion.

It is manifest that all these criticisms have a common direction. They emphasise in different ways the tendency of human organisations to become mechanical and in consequence to create in their members a mechanical way of thinking and behaving. Thus the organisation impedes and may arrest the growth of personality. It suppresses originality, impairs the power of independent judgment, elicits a type of slavish obedience, and obscures from men their real purposes and satisfactions.

All these criticisms are summed up in the attitude of the mystic. In his career we see a cultivation of that kind of originality and self-reliance which comes from being alone with God—a temper of mind dangerous enough to the docility required by the institution. He has discovered a source of new values which makes him turn a penetrating gaze upon all established things, and his conviction that he has, as it were, God behind him to confirm him in his independence, generates an impatience with all forms of social discipline. No man can undertake, as the mystic undertakes, the task of discovering what his deepest purpose is and of making over his life in the light of that discovery without becoming the most difficult radical of all to deal with, the radical who confronts the existing order not with the intent of pure destruction but with a new standard of what human nature really needs. In effect the mystic says to society: Here I stand with my own vision of

truth, my own ideal of human destiny, my own power of judgment—all these conferred upon me, if you like, not earned, but still mine. If you are to justify yourself you must find a place for me and for others like me. How many institutions can stand the test? Must they not look upon the spirit of such a challenge as so much insubordination or rebellion?

This attitude comes out most clearly in the mystic's judgment upon the ecclesiastical institution. The church proposes to furnish men with the means to some total good, 'salvation'; it will mediate between man and God. To the mystic this looks like denying the possibility of an immediate relation to God. But he insists upon the possibility and necessity of a personal discovery of God and a personal assurance of salvation. He refuses to admit that a church can monopolise the channels of revelation; he will not believe that the accumulated wisdom of the priesthood contains all that the human soul need know. Thus he is at once the democrat and the pioneer of the religious life: the democrat, because he believes that any individual may receive "revelation," the pioneer, because he believes in exploring the problems of his destiny for himself. From both points of view he appears as the individualist critic of the institution, for he is definitely committed to the idea that the social technique represented by the institution is not adequate.

We have noted how any institution tends in time to take its own continued existence as intrinsically valuable. It is at this tendency that the mystics generally strike. Their comment upon all forms of social organi-

sation is that these are, or should be, means to human well-being. Since they claim to have had an anticipatory experience of this ultimate good they can look back upon institutional life as so much preliminary discipline or training. The unmistakeable mark of the mystic is that he is the enlightened one: he claims to know what human beings are groping after in their various social devices, and so he looks upon their efforts partly with disparagement, partly with indulgence, as anyone who has achieved the results of discipline looks upon that discipline—as a thing necessary, of course, but still subordinate. The quality and meaning of this 'superiority' have been dwelt on in an earlier chapter; here we need only point out how it acts as a corrective to that tendency among the guardians and the supporters of institutions to become self-important and self-sufficient. Every institution needs to be recalled to a sense of its relations with the rest of life, to be reminded of the fact that men cannot spend all their lives learning and that the final aim of all discipline is to confer freedom. "Love God and do as you please," with its corollary that the law and every other institution is a schoolmaster, may be dangerous doctrine, but it is often sane and necessary doctrine to throw at the persons of our mandarins, political, economic, or ecclesiastical.

We have been attempting to bring out, with perhaps exaggerated emphasis, the opposition, or at least the contrast, between mysticism and institutional life. It is better to paint the differences too strongly than to slur them over. And we may express the truth of the

situation in this way: the opposition is real, but not final; mysticism is beyond institutions but not necessarily hostile to them. Aristotle remarked that the being who can dispense with the state must be either a beast or a god; the mystic in dispensing after his fashion with all institutions is certainly making claims to divinity, but that does not expose him to the charge of 'insolence,' for the divine is here not the negation but the completion of the human. To put the matter differently: what the mystic rejects is not the claim that the established forms of social life are necessary for a complete life but the claim that they are sufficient.

We may therefore sum up what is valid in the mystical criticism as follows. There is a type of mind—radical, independent, Socratic—which the institution does not and cannot produce. Yet while it cannot produce, it can and must make use of, the radical. Its very life depends on so doing. The reasons for this are obvious. It cannot generate the radical virtues, for its object is, quite simply, to conserve whatever is of tested worth in human experience. It is an instrument of continuity which carries over from the past into the present the permanently valuable results of thinking and experiment. It represents, ideally at any rate, the funded social knowledge into which all novelties must be worked if they are to be preserved at all. Institutions are therefore by nature conservative and the virtues which they encourage are docility and loyalty. They offer no favourable soil for the growth of critics and possible rebels. Yet none the less they must use such minds, for to cut themselves off from the sources of

criticism and novelty is to condemn themselves to stagnation or death. Their aim is to conserve; but what shall they conserve if it be not whatever is fruitful in experiment? What they need is intelligent servants, not machines; an alert regard for human rights, not slavishness. For those who are to sustain their life they must go outside their own barriers. A specific illustration may make these considerations less abstract. The exigencies of domestic order in time of war revealed a common doctrine about the state: that it is an association for conduct and not for belief. On this basis we should give dissenters, whether religious or political, short shrift; we should impose an enforced silence upon minorities. State action, we might declare with Bosanquet, covers that region where the getting of a thing done is more important than the motives from which it is done. But how long a tenure of life can we predict for a state so conceived? Its length of life will be measured by its power of compulsion. Such is not the ideal of a democratic state. If the test of a democracy be its treatment of minorities that is, first, because the democratic state is theoretically regarded as embodying the real will of its citizens and as being therefore an association for belief as well as conduct, and, secondly, because the only agreement worth having is that of men who possess the right to differ. The man who weakly echoes my sentiments or opinions does not provide me with a victory in argument, but only he who knows his own mind and who has a mind of his own to know. "The only joy I have in him is that the

not-mine is mine." The men whose loyalty the state must seek to enlist if it is not to go the way of all arbitrary powers are those who have refused to be brow-beaten by the cudgels of the tyrants of society confessed and unconfessed. If it be true that the state needs "enlightened patriotism" then that means that the state depends for its continued existence upon those who have struck out for themselves into a region where political loyalties are forgotten. And what is true of the state is true of other institutions. The individual conscience is the spot of variation in the moral world: it is the lonely pioneers who have lifted the general level of the social judgment. And to say that pioneers have often brought back false reports of the promised land is not here relevant. Some of them at least have brought back true reports—that is the essential thing for the loyal servants of the institution to remember. One true prophet is enough to justify the liberty of prophesying.

Thus the state, the church, the family, need members who in serving these serve at the same time an end beyond them. The alternative is to take the institution as an end in itself and so to destroy its pliancy and its capacity for growth. I suppose it may be said that no man has shown that he really values a thing until he has proved his ability to do without it. To surrender a treasure without bitterness is the final test of love's sincerity. That test, with regard to all the recognised goods of life, the mystic imposes on himself—and survives. The institution which affects to see

in him an enemy is excommunicating one who is fitted to keep it in touch with the renewing sources of its own life.

CHAPTER XV

THE FUTURE OF MYSTICISM*

IN our introductory chapter we described some of the factors responsible for the disfavour with which mysticism is now regarded. That account of the situation needs to be modified. While it is true that there is little scope or liking for professedly religious mysticism, nevertheless the mystical temper of mind still informs many human activities and the mystical type of relief is still sought and found. If mysticism is not conspicuous on the surface of life today that is not because man's need for it is less than ever before, but because much of its historic work is being performed by other means. It is as though the religious impulse which in mysticism appears undivided had become distributed among a number of secular channels and so lost its identity.

The romantic discovery of Nature, for example, has disclosed something like an equivalent for worship. Nature, to whatever is over-civilised and sophisticated in us, appears as that which is at once Primitive and Real, and the original without us evokes the original that is within. The mind that has begun to perceive the vanity and vexation of unending strenuosity learns, under the influence of the silent ease of the natural powers, to cultivate "a wise passiveness." The superb

* In this chapter I have used parts of an article on Art as an Antidote for Morality which appeared in The International Journal of Ethics, Jan. 1920.

indifference of Nature to all human ends and distinctions, an indifference which yet does not seem to shut us out from a kind of communion with her, enables one to set those ends and distinctions in a proper perspective. For all these reasons Nature has come to serve as an equivalent—to many an all-sufficient equivalent—of the God of religion.

As for the way in which the appreciation of Art, especially of Music and Poetry, may perform a similar function, it will be sufficient to give one contemporary illustration that we may take as typical.

> The essential charm of all poetry, for the sake of which, in the last resort, it exists, lies in its power of inducing, satisfying, and regulating what may be called Transcendental Feeling, especially that form of Transcendental Feeling which manifests itself as solemn sense of Timeless Being—of "That which was, and is, and ever shall be," overshadowing us with its presence. . . . Transcendental Feeling I would explain genetically . . . by the persistence in us of that primeval condition from which we are sprung, when life was still as sound asleep as Death, and there was no Time yet. That we should fall for a while, now and then, from our waking time-marking life, into the timeless slumber of this primeval life is easy to understand; for the principle solely operative in that primeval life is indeed the fundamental principle of our nature, being that Vegetative Part of the soul which made from the first, and still silently makes, the assumption on which our whole rational life of conduct and science rests—the assumption that life is worth living.[1]

It is clear that today we are finding new and varied

[1] J. A. Stewart, The Myths of Plato, pp. 22, 39.

methods of restoring that equilibrium of the mind which historic mysticism has undertaken to bring about. And we are thus confronted with the question whether, as we learn to multiply and master these modes, we may not altogether outgrow the need for religious mysticism.

I propose to limit the consideration of this topic by confining myself to the aesthetic experience, partly because its claims in this matter are the most important, partly because this offers the most convenient means of bringing forward such tentative suggestions as I have to offer.

It has often been observed that in experiencing beauty we enter a region in which the tasks and the judgments of the moral life have ceased, for the time being at least, to concern us. For Art, in giving us that which is individual, the universal in and through the particular, presents to us a rendering of things in some sense finished and complete. We may share the passion of Lady Macbeth and feel the guilt of her husband, but we are not asked to condemn or to approve, we need not take sides, *nothing has to be done about it.* All our feelings are subordinated to the major emotion of aesthetic satisfaction, and the power and beauty of the whole composition induce a consciousness of unity which is able to contain within itself the moral distraction. This is the element of truth in those theories of Art as an escape. Here also we must seek whatever is valid in the cries of Art for Art's sake or Art beyond good or evil. The critics of Art, on the other hand, from Plato onwards, have found it hard to believe that

the figures created by the artist are not set up as examples, or at any rate that they will not produce a crowd of imitators. The censorious have insisted that the beautiful must conform to the standards of morality. They cannot be convinced that it is no part of the artist's function or intention to edify or to instruct. And this in spite of the artist's deliverances. "The drama, like the symphony," wrote Synge, "does not teach or prove anything. Analysts with their problems, and teachers with their systems, are soon as old-fashioned as the pharmacopoeia of Galen,—look at Ibsen and the Germans,—but the best plays of Ben Jonson and Molière can no more go out of fashion than the blackberries on the hedges. . . . The drama is made serious—in the French sense of the word—not by the degree in which it is taken up with problems that are serious in themselves, but by the degree in which it gives the nourishment, not very easy to define, on which our imaginations live."[2] In the world of the imagination no verdicts are prescribed: anything is possible. We shall find a Mephistopheles sublime, while the rogues and the villains and the other moral outcasts shall so appear as to make us cry out

> Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,
> But I do love thee!

The mind is set free to play. The facile distinctions of everyday living are washed out and all our habits of judgment are in abeyance. We recapture innocence at some higher level of the mind.

[2] Preface to The Tinker's Wedding.

Yet we need not be accused of underestimating the value of that nourishing of the imagination of which Synge speaks if we recall at this point the historic stubborn antagonism of the moralist to beauty. And it is safe to assume that what goes by the name of Puritanism has its roots in human instincts or feelings which have a wisdom of their own. Following up this clue, then, let us ask what is the real danger to religion and morals in Beauty, the danger of which the Puritan is aware, though he may not be able to define it? It lies, I believe, in the tendency of the aesthetic experience to become self-contained. We have emphasised above the serenity of the typical work of art, pointing out that if it does not lull to sleep neither can it be said to awaken the moral impulse in us; but that is only another way of saying that beauty casts a spell upon us: it tempts us to remain within its own charmed circle, it lures us to a profounder absorption, a deeper trance.

> Here will I dwell, for Heaven is in these lips,
> And all is dross that is not Helena.

Such hypnotic effects do not, it is true, fall within the scope of the artist's intention, but that they are often produced by the work of art it would be difficult to deny. The joys and pleasures of beauty are so ravishing that they tend to make one forget everything but themselves. The nourishing of the imagination, the heightening of vital energies,—these have a way of being forgotten. We start by being lovers of beauty; we end by being hedonists. If anyone doubts this, let him consider how again and again in history the defenders of

beauty have harked back to the theory that the work of art exists only to give enjoyment.

Now the claim to such finality in experience is one which neither the religious nor the moral sense can tolerate. It is good for man to touch a point beyond good or evil, to lay hold, as it were by anticipation, upon that which is absolutely satisfying, but such an ultimate is no place for a mortal to stay at. This finality is, after all, a premature finality, and Beauty in the place of the absolute good is a usurper. If the religious man, then, distrusts art as a substitute for religion it is because art offers too many temptations in the way of enjoyment to human ambition, because it may too easily become an Island of Circe to which men go but from which they do not return.

I have stated this contention with dogmatic assurance. But I am aware that to many people it will seem like a travesty of the aesthetic experience to describe it as self-contained. Plato observed, and many after him have confirmed him, that beauty generates an impulse in the observer to create after its kind. Once the soul had become possessed by the love of beauty it would feel the necessity of making over all the ways of life to conform to the image stamped upon it. Love and virtue would be so many expressions of this masterful need. And experience seems to bear out this assertion. "In the rush and roar of the stormy wind," writes Richard Jefferies, "the same exaltation, the same desire, lifted me for a moment. I went there every morning, I could not exactly define why; it was like going to a rose bush to taste the scent of the flower and feel

the dew from its petals on the lips. But I desired the beauty—the inner subtle meaning—to be in me, that I might have it, and with it an existence of a higher kind. . . . After the sensuous enjoyment always came the thought, the desire: That I might be like this; that I might have the inner meaning of the sun, the light, the earth, the trees and grass, translated into some growth of excellence in myself, both of body and mind; greater perfection of physique, greater perfection of mind and soul; that I might be higher in myself."[3]

But can life be securely organised about the principle of beauty? Are the ideas of order, harmony, symmetry, sufficient to establish the moral and the social and the political structures?

We may be helped towards an answer by analysing a particular example. Let us imagine a state that is held together, neither by force nor by blind loyalty, but by the fascination exercised upon all the members by a political structure which, in its perfect subordination of parts to each other and to the whole, embodies the essentials of a beautiful composition. At the top of the pyramid set a group of full citizens, free to enjoy their power and their culture; at the base, a crowd of slaves. If beauty be the presiding influence there need be no murmuring, no rebellion, no vulgar climbing and pushing on the one hand, no condescension and no social 'uplift' on the other. To each is allotted the place to which it has pleased God, Nature, and the principle of Beauty to call him. All alike, but especially the

[3] The Story of My Heart.

slaves, can enjoy that perfect freedom which is—service.

Such a state is beautiful, beautiful as the complicated evolutions of well-drilled troops are beautiful. But it has obvious defects.

In the first place, it will last only so long as men prefer the beauty of being well drilled to everything else. But men want other things besides beauty; shall we not say that justice is one of them? Should we set it down wholly to meanness and ugliness and enviousness of spirit if a slave in this state should spot the contrast between the freedom which his service is said to have won for him and that of the classes so far above him? Should we blame him if, feeling, as even slaves will do, that he had greater things in him, he should be moved to protest at a system which in practice identified accident with the decrees of beauty or providence? Yet we know how his protests would be received: as symptoms not so much of political heresy as of bad form. He is disturbing a beautiful equilibrium, marring a beautiful integrity. We know the type of response only too well in our own time. There is no criticism, no protest, and no rebellion, however justified in morals, that cannot be dismissed with the cry that this is an offence against law and order and that the lower classes should be taught to know their place. Nice, respectable people have no patience with discontent and evil passions,—they are so ugly. At all costs we must avoid "a scene."

The same weakness which disqualifies beauty as a principle of political consolidation is revealed else-

where. A social group which prides itself upon an achieved harmony, which takes a proper delight in the ready mutual understanding, the amiability, and the geniality which surround it like a warm air, will hesitate long before admitting one who may not be "a kindred soul." Within such a group the judgment of taste will quickly take the place of the moral judgment. But the judgment of taste tends to become stereotyped, recognising only those things which conform to its own rather arbitrary standards. It determines the mind to exclusions which are hard to overcome. Havelock Ellis somewhere says that real democracy will not be possible until men have achieved common standards of cleanliness. If a man doesn't wash it is hard, for the godly at least, to believe in his virtues. (Unless, of course, he be a mediaeval saint. But then *his* odour, being merely a matter of historic record, is no longer offensive.) What a weight of moral disapproval may we not import into the words, 'A dirty little unwashed specimen!' And the same is true if we substitute the more genteel terms "philistine," "barbarian," "impossible outsider." They perform the work of social ostracism just as effectively as their coarser equivalents.

As with the organisation of social life, so with that of the individual. If I decide that my life must at all costs be beautiful and that beauty may be a sufficient guide to conduct, I shall find that the 'aesthete' and the 'decadent' have already provided me with a model: a blind eye turned to the ugly and the unpleasant, a deliberate dwelling upon what is agreeable, a loyalty only to the fugitive beauty of separate experiences or

separate moments in which we are held only by the thrill or the flavour which each may have to impart. Life becomes episodic.

We may express our conclusion in various ways. We may say that beauty, as a principle for the ordering of life, has not enough indubitable vigour to confront and assimilate its opposite; or we may say that it tempts us to be content with premature syntheses and finalities, or, finally, that its delights are so potent that they seduce us away into a world of irresponsible enjoyment.

This account, I need hardly say, makes no pretence of being adequate. We have singled out for scrutiny only one tendency in the total influence of beauty. We do not deny that there are others which run counter to this.

An objection may be raised at this point. We have maintained (it will be said) that the lover of beauty may be led astray by his exclusive devotion to beauty, so that he becomes dreamy, otherworldly, *soft*. But is not this precisely the same kind of danger to which the religious devotee is exposed? How then can we expect to find in this a means for differentiating between the mystic and the lover of beauty?

The answer is, that while mysticism can provide for its own correction, the love of beauty cannot. Beauty, like religion, has "a power to soothe and fortify the soul"; it can relax constraint, restore sanity, and fill in those parts of the total picture of life which morality and philosophy and science are forced to leave out. But our turning towards its various manifestations for

solace and refreshment is largely instinctive, and our reward, from our point of view, is in consequence accidental. Further, since we do not know clearly what we are about when we seek beauty we have no means of knowing when we are misusing or exploiting it. We know so little what we are about that we are often ready to accept, as we have already seen, as plausible doctrine the statement that the end and object of art is to give enjoyment. The mystical method of self-recovery is, by contrast, less instinctive and more deliberate. It involves a prolonged preparation in which moral self-scrutiny, with its rejection of all that is ignoble and self-seeking, holds the central place. Whatever unity of mind, whatever increment of moral energy the mystic may be seeking, he proposes to earn, as far as that is possible. He is determined to be self-conscious and self-possessed: he will know where he stands. It is, then, what we may call the moral ingredient in his ambition that enables him to distinguish between what is essential and what is accidental in his attainment.

I do not maintain that it is possible wholly to transcend the unconscious work of instinct in this matter of spiritual self-recovery. It must be obvious that the mystic himself rides to harbour upon the wave of some purely natural impulse: his deliberate effort alone would not carry man far. For if mysticism is not magic neither is it industry. It is not a manipulation of Deity for the sake of producing effects clearly defined in advance. Much of the mystic preparation is like prayer in its uncommercial and ideal forms, the prayer not for

some specified benefit but for some total good. The mystic at the end of his preparation is simply waiting for an apparition and an event which he is careful not to define too particularly; he is waiting, too, with the full consciousness that his own effort has now carried him as far as it can go, and that it needs to be completed by some touch from without.

Yet in spite of this limitation the mystic is right, I believe, in trying to be as deliberate and as self-conscious as possible, for the good reason that an achievement won by any other means is precarious. What mystery and apparent accident have done for us we may accidentally and mysteriously lose. It may be that we shall never be able to dispense wholly with the instinctive and the unconscious in us, but, as creatures endowed with intelligence, we have not been left at the mercy of these things. They will always need self-consciousness to complete them. The deliberate redemption of the unconscious, therefore, is an essentially humane task. And this is the choice which the mystics have made.

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